



Mr. Curtis and the Widow take their daughter to the
Nunnery School.

See page 55.

AMY'S PROBATION;

OR,

SIX MONTHS AT A CONVENT SCHOOL.

AN ANSWER TO THE QUESTION,

SHALL PROTESTANT GIRLS BE SENT TO ROMAN
CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "GLAUCIA," "FLAVIA," "AYESHA," ETC

TWO ILLUSTRATIONS.

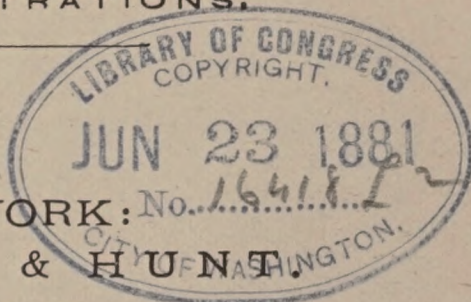
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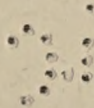
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INTRODUCTION.

I THINK a word of introduction is necessary to this story of a convent school, for my readers will, perhaps, think that I have overstated the case in my eagerness to open the eyes of the American public to this grave danger, which is working secretly but rapidly in their midst. That there might be no mistake about this I have modeled the school here depicted, in its rules and regulations, not upon those conducted in Catholic countries, but upon that of the Jesuit College of Stonyhurst, in England, the same system being followed in all Jesuit schools throughout the world. One of their own priests, trained

at this establishment, the Hon. and Rev. William Petre, has powerfully exposed the system of Catholic education in a pamphlet recently published in London, and from which I now take the liberty of copying a few lines; and I may say here, that the rules for silence and separation given in my story are based upon the statements of this pamphlet. I have merely made such alterations as were necessary for a girl's school, relaxing some rules I thought could scarcely be carried out. That I have not overstated my case I now append the following lines from Mr. Petre's pamphlet:

“We were not expected to walk about in couples in conversation. If talking in couples was at all persisted in, the parties were liable to arbitrary separation. There is a special fear of particular friendships in the schools of which I am speaking.

No boy was permitted to lay his hand on a companion. I do not mean to engage in a fight, but to wrestle or to play. The fear of 'romping' was hardly less intense than the fear of particular friendships. Any kind of demonstration of affection was regarded with marked suspicion. Stonyhurst boys would not have liked to be seen shaking hands with one another. To walk arm in arm would not have been permitted. In all these matters we were surrounded by a close atmosphere of suspicion. The Prefects were the empowered administrators of this system, and were bound to uphold it."

In another place the writer says: "The theory and practice which I found in acceptance at Stonyhurst were, that at no hour of the day or night should boys be away from the eye of a master;" and it

must be remembered that this English college is but one of many where the same system prevails, and which to-day are being multiplied throughout the length and breadth of America.

The prayers and hymns quoted in my work are taken from a manual of devotion called "The Garden of the Soul." The quotations are given *verbatim* from the "Constitutions of the Order of Jesus," and are used by Mr. Seymour in his work "Mornings with the Jesuits," which gives the fullest exposure of the whole system.

That this little work may do much practical good is the earnest prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

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AMY'S PROBATION.



CHAPTER I.

AUGUSTA CRANE.

“ONLY fifty, and so sudden, too! Dear me! it is very shocking;” and the lady sighed and looked across at her husband, who was trying to hide his emotion behind his “Tribune.”

After a minute's silence she said: “I suppose you would like the girls to put on mourning, John; it would only be becoming for your only brother.”

“Yes, yes; get any thing you like. I will just run down town, and then I must start East, or I shall not be in time for the funeral.”

"You don't know much of your brother's affairs, do you, my dear? But I suppose he has left his wife and family well provided for," said Mrs. Curtis cautiously.

"I haven't heard much about poor Bob since I came out West; but, thank God, I can help the girls a bit if they need it."

"Yes, yes; but don't make any foolish promises, John, in that direction. You must remember you have children of your own, and Milly's education is costing a good deal now."

"Don't frighten yourself, my dear; you and the children shall always have all you want. But I must go now. I will run in again on my way to the depot;" and Mr. Curtis, looking very sad and rueful in spite of his efforts to the contrary, hurried down the street thinking of the brother who had been such a dear companion in

the days of their boyhood and such a helpful friend and counselor since he had reached man's estate. He owed all his present prosperity to his brother's friendly counsel and timely help, and he had always meant to give him some tangible proof of his gratitude; for, although no word had been said upon the subject in the letters that passed between them, he had a dim idea that things had not prospered with his elder brother of late. And now that he was gone beyond the reach of kindly words or deeds of gratitude, the wealthy, prosperous merchant, as he walked down town, reproached himself bitterly for the neglect, and resolved to do what he could for the widow and her daughters.

His brother had only left two children, both girls. The merchant wished they had been boys, that he could have taken them

both into his office ; for the youngest was a year older than his Milly, who was now just thirteen, but looked a good deal older. He wondered what his nieces were like, and what he could do for them, all the time he was making arrangements with his head clerk ; and when he went home for his valise on the way to the depot it was about these and the bereaved widow rather than his own wife and children that his thoughts were occupied.

Meanwhile Mrs. Curtis was busy with her preparations for going into mourning, and was in the midst of her consultation with the dress-maker when a visitor was announced.

“Milly, just run and see who it is. I really am so fatigued I cannot see anybody to-day,” said the lady, throwing herself back in the rocking-chair.

But Milly came back the next minute, bringing the visitor with her. "It is only Aunt Maria, mamma," she said, picking up the fashion book she had flung aside when she went out.

"O Maria, I am glad you have come in, for you can help me to decide about the kilting and flounces for Milly's dress. I was afraid when I heard your knock that it might be that tiresome Miss Green."

"Well, I dare say she will be here to tell you the news presently. Who do you think I saw just after I left you this morning? Augusta Crane."

Milly let her book fall again when she heard this. "Have the Cranes come home from Europe, auntie?" she said.

"Yes, my dear; and Augusta is so improved, she is quite charming."

"Well, there was plenty of room for

improvement, aunt. But Augusta did not go to Europe, you know; she was sent to some school somewhere near New York—a convent school, I think it was. Don't you remember the talk about it at the time?"

"I do remember something about it now you mention it. Of course, a good deal of prejudice exists against convent schools, but, after all, it may be only prejudice, you know. At any rate, Augusta Crane is wonderfully improved in her manners and deportment, and it is only fair, you know, to give honor where honor is due."

"O yes, of course. When did Mr. and Mrs. Crane reach home?" asked Mrs. Curtis.

"Last night, I think. Augusta will probably call here in a day or two, if you cannot call upon them."

“Well, I certainly shall not do that. They held their heads high enough before, and this trip to Europe will probably send them an inch or two higher,” said Mrs. Curtis with some warmth.

“Well, mamma, I think we had better wait before having my best dress made up, and we can see how Augusta has hers made. They will be direct from Paris, you may be sure, and if she does call here—”

“I don’t believe she will, Milly. You seem to forget that she would scarcely speak to you last year, although you went to the same school together. A more proud, haughty girl than Augusta Crane I never knew.”

“Well, my dear, you must make some allowance for her, you know,” put in Aunt Maria. “Mr. Crane is undoubtedly the

richest man in the State. He owns all the best part of the town and half the county besides."

"Yes, bought it up, a mere swamp, at fifty cents an acre," said Mrs. Curtis, disparagingly.

"His father did that, my dear; and his son is to-day one of the wealthiest men in America by the speculation. But we were talking of Augusta, and I should advise you to cultivate her for Milly's sake. The Cranes are the leaders of society, you know, and if Milly once got introduced to their set, it would be as good as a fortune to her."

"Well, thank goodness, she is not likely to be dependent upon that sort of fortune; but still it can do her no harm to get into the best society, and so if we have an opportunity, we will cultivate Miss Augusta.

But now do tell me about these dresses, Maria. How shall I have them made?"

There was a long discussion upon this important topic between the two ladies, aided by suggestions from the dress-maker, and when this was settled it was arranged that Mrs. Curtis and her sister, Miss Maria West, should drive out the next morning and call upon the Cranes, and if any opportunity offered Miss Augusta should be invited to come and see Milly; for, in point of fact, Mrs. Curtis was quite as anxious as her sister to be on visiting terms with the richest people in town. Milly professed to be quite indifferent about the matter. Augusta was proud, haughty, and disagreeable, and always would be, she said; but when that young lady called to see her, a few days afterward, Milly was very pleased, and soon altered her opin-

ion about her former school-fellow. She inquired very kindly after all her former companions, and then asked Milly if she would not like to go to the Eastern States to school.

"Yes, indeed I should," said Milly, eagerly. "I do so want to see New York. One reads so much about Broadway and Fifth Avenue, that I often wonder whether they are any thing like our State-street. Of course, you can tell me all about them, Augusta."

The young lady laughed. "I did not see much of New York city; but then you see, Milly, I did not feel so curious about these places as you do," she said.

"Then you have not seen Broadway," said Milly, in a disappointed tone.

"Yes, dear; I have, and I know there are some splendid shops there, but at

school we had so many other things to think about that Broadway did not trouble me much."

"Did you like being at school?" asked Milly.

"O yes, very much. You know I am going back for another year."

"Are you, really?" said Milly with widely opened eyes. "I thought you were sixteen last birthday."

"So I was, but I feel as though I had only just begun to learn some things, and so I have begged papa to let me have another year with my dear teachers."

"Well, you do surprise me, Augusta. When I heard you were going to school—a convent school, too—I quite pitied you."

"Not more than I pitied myself," laughed Augusta.

"How was it you went to a convent

school, Miss Crane?" asked Mrs. Curtis, who came into the room at this moment.

"Well, ma'am, the Sister Superior was a very dear friend of mamma's some years ago, and a sort of promise was given, when I was a baby, that I should spend a year with her. She has often reminded mamma of this promise, but until this trip to Europe was talked of there seemed no chance of its fulfillment, but when that was planned we had another letter, asking mamma to let me go to the school the sisters had just commenced, and it was settled almost before papa knew any thing about it."

"And you really like it now, Miss Crane. I have heard so much against convent schools," said Mrs. Curtis.

"It's all prejudice. I wish you would let Milly come with me to see for herself," she said, turning to Mrs. Curtis.

But that lady shook her head. "I am sure her papa would never consent," she said.

"I suppose Mr. Curtis shares in the general prejudice against them. People fancy that the scholars are forced to attend all the services in chapel, hear mass, and go to confession, and I know not what."

"Well, is it not so?" asked Mrs. Curtis.

"O no, it is quite a mistake! no one is forced to go to any of the services; no one ever asked me to go," added Augusta, with a great show of candor.

"Well, you quite surprise me, Miss Crane. I always thought the nuns gave the girls no peace until they had persuaded them to become nuns, too."

"O dear! there was never a greater mistake than that," laughed Augusta; "Who could have put such an idea into your head, Mrs. Curtis?"

"Well, I don't know how it was, but I am sure I have always believed it was like this," said Mrs. Curtis.

"Well, perhaps it was something like this years and years ago; but now so many Protestant children are sent to convent schools the sisters always promise that they shall have perfect liberty in religious matters. I know it is so at my school."

"And you say there are a great many Protestant girls there."

"Yes, more than half are Protestants. You would not be so surprised, dear Mrs. Curtis, if you knew how much better we are taught—in music and languages especially. You see, most of the sisters in the convent are real ladies, who teach for the pleasure of teaching, and not for the profit; in fact, there is no profit, for although they give much better instruction

in every thing, the charges are little more than half what is charged at an ordinary boarding-school."

"Indeed. Well, it's very kind of the nuns to take so much trouble for nothing, and I almost wish it was not so far off, that Milly might go for one term, at least."

"O mamma, I wish I could," chimed in Milly. "You say I do not get on with my music under Mrs. Preston; do let me go back with Augusta."

"My dear, I am afraid your papa would not hear of it," said Mrs. Curtis.

"Couldn't you persuade him to let her come for a year?" said Miss Crane. "It would be so nice to take Milly back with me."

Milly and her mother both felt flattered by this speech and Augusta's graciousness, but still Mrs. Curtis shook her head.

"I am afraid Mr. Curtis will never consent," she said, speaking very slowly, and half regretfully.

"What is that, my dear? O Miss Crane, I beg your pardon, but you see I am quite at home here, we have always been sisters, and—"

"And Aunt Maria rules mamma," put in Milly, "so we may as well tell her what we were talking about."

"Well, I am sure I shall have Miss West on my side, for she is above the illiberal notions and prejudices of more common people," said Augusta pleasantly.

"What is it, my dear?" asked Miss West, settling herself for a comfortable chat.

"We have been talking about convent schools, Maria; Miss Crane wants Milly to go back with her after this recess."

"My dear Miss Crane, are you really

going back to school?" said Miss West, in surprise.

"Yes, I very much wish to have another year there, and papa has consented to let me go."

"Well, I should think that one fact alone ought to be sufficient to dispel any vulgar prejudice against convent schools, for I never knew a girl prefer to go away to school when she could have a good time at home. I am very much surprised to hear that you are going back again."

"You would not be if you knew all," said Augusta, with a little heightened color. "The fact is, I am not nearly so proficient in music as I wish to be," she added.

"Ah! I have heard that they are unrivaled as teachers of music," said Miss West.

"Yes, indeed; I often wish some of my friends here could hear the sisters sing and play."

"And they don't force the scholars to become Roman Catholics, auntie," put in Milly.

"Very likely not; I dare say a good deal that is said about them is only prejudice, after all," remarked Miss West.

"It is that and nothing else, I assure you," said Augusta; "for my part I get quite out of patience when people talk as they do. Such narrow-minded bigotry was all very well for the sixteenth century, but in these days of liberty people ought to be more charitable, and lay aside their unreasonable prejudice."

"That is just my opinion," said Miss West, nodding pleasantly at their guest, and mentally wondering whether the rich

gray dress Augusta wore was the newest Parisian color.

"I wish you could persuade papa to adopt your opinion, auntie; he might let me go to school with Augusta then," said Milly, coaxingly.

Aunt Maria laughed. "You will make convent schools fashionable among our young ladies, Miss Crane," she said.

"I hope so," said Augusta, and then she rose to take her leave, promising to call again in a day or two, and pressing Milly to come and see her the next day, to look over a portfolio of drawings and paintings she had brought home with her.

"Are they your own work?" asked Miss West.

"O yes; I have learned to love painting as well as music, since I have been to this school."

When the door closed upon their visitor Miss West turned triumphantly to her sister. "Now isn't that girl a credit to any school?" she said.

"Yes; I am puzzled—amazed at the change in her. I wish Milly could go back with her."

"She must, my dear. You must get over John's prejudices," and Miss West sat down as though her judgment upon this point was not to be questioned.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO SISTERS.

MR. CURTIS was absent from his home nearly a fortnight, and Mrs. Curtis was much exercised in her mind as to the cause of this lengthened delay in her husband's return. Nothing had been said in his home letters, but she had a dim foreboding that her brother-in-law's affairs were in some confusion, and she was in fear lest her husband should burden himself with any responsibility concerning the widow and two orphan girls.

"I wish he would come home or explain just how matters are, and then I should know what to do," she said irritably, when talking to her sister one day.

"Well, my dear, if things are as you fear, depend upon it, John will undertake to educate the two girls," said Miss West, settling herself back in the rocking-chair.

"Nonsense, Maria; he would never be so foolish, with our children to educate, too. Besides they are both older than Milly now—old enough to leave school."

"Well, my dear, we shall see. It is not often I am wrong," remarked Miss West, and in this she was correct. Her shrewdness gave her a wonderful insight into most things, and had helped to foster the ascendancy she certainly exercised over her more indolent, though elder, sister.

"Now, my dear, suppose my surmise is correct," began Miss West, after a pause. "What do you mean to do?"

"Do! Why I wont allow him to throw his money away upon strangers. I tell

you, Maria, for all we seem so wealthy, I have enough to do to make ends meet sometimes."

"But you see the difficulty is, these two girls are not strangers, but your nieces, and I think I have heard John say he was under obligation to this brother."

Mrs. Curtis winced. "I'm sure I don't know any thing about it," she said.

"Well, you may forget, but John wont; and so you may prepare yourself to receive these girls."

"What do you mean, Maria?"

"Why, I should not be surprised if John brought them along with him, to send them to school with Milly."

"But we couldn't afford it, I tell you."

"John wont think much of that, I fancy. But now suppose they do come, what do you mean to do?"

"Well, I can't turn them out, can I? What do you mean, Maria?"

"Well, this. You want Milly to go back with Augusta Crane—I think it is such a chance as should not be neglected—but you are afraid John will object through the old prejudice against convent schools. Now, you propose that the three girls should go together. It will be an immense saving; the girls will be well educated at the cost of only a few dollars; and if these nieces of yours have any taste for music, they might be trained for music teachers, and so be put in the way of earning a very genteel livelihood for themselves by and by."

"Maria, how clever you are!" exclaimed her sister. "I should never have thought of such a plan."

"Of course not, my dear; you would

have fumed and fussed and grumbled, and the affair would have ended in your being burdened with those girls for the rest of your days. But now don't go and spoil my nice little plan by disclosing it to your husband too soon. Wait and hear what he has to say, and object at first to any thing and every thing he may propose in this direction. He will expect it of you. You must yield by degrees, bring out about the visit of Augusta Crane, and what lovely things she can paint, and how greatly she has improved in her music and behavior and every thing that is requisite in a lady. Milly is wild to go to this convent school, but she must not propose it to her papa too soon, or he will take the alarm at once."

The shrewd lady was not far out in her surmises concerning Mr. Curtis, and what

he proposed doing for his orphan nieces ; but she would have laughed could she have known the trepidation he felt at the thought of proposing the plan to his wife. He quite meant to carry it out. He always did have his own way when he had once made up his mind about any thing ; but he dreaded the nagging, the sighs and groans and visions of poverty his wife would conjure up when she heard of the plan, and so it was with a troubled, anxious face that he greeted them upon his arrival. Nothing was said about his brother's affairs that night, but the next morning, when breakfast was over, he began :

“My dear, is that room next to Milly's still full of old lumber?”

“Full of old lumber, John ! There's the furniture you would not have sold when we came from the old house.”

“Ah! to be sure. Well, perhaps it would be better to sell some of it after all, my dear, as you proposed, but you might keep enough to furnish it decently as a bedroom.”

“Another bedroom, John! What is that for?”

“Well, my dear, the fact is, poor Bob’s affairs are in some confusion. Fanny is going to her own people for a time, and I have asked the girls to come here. They can go to school with Milly, you know.”

For answer Mrs. Curtis burst into tears—real tears—for this argued to her nothing less than a total forgetfulness of her interests on the part of her husband, and a cruel desertion of his own children, and she brought out her complaint in a storm of angry sobs and tears.

“Now, Esther, do be reasonable. What

less can I do for these poor girls? I wish you could see how broken-hearted they are, poor things."

"But—but you don't consider your own children, John. These girls ought to get their own living."

"Well, perhaps they may, by and by, They might learn to teach something themselves, but they are not fit for that yet."

By degrees Mrs. Curtis grew more calm, and then spoke of Augusta Crane, and how greatly she had improved, and how much better she had learned every thing at this convent school.

But at the word "convent" Mr. Curtis took alarm, and declared no child of his should ever go to one; but by degrees his wife managed to persuade him that this prejudice was, after all, very unreasonable, since Augusta had assured her that the

most perfect religious liberty was allowed to the girls.

“Well, my dear, I don’t know much about this matter, certainly, but I have always heard that this education plan is entirely in the hands of the Jesuits, and—”

“But, my dear, Augusta Crane has been there a whole year, and she must know how every thing is managed by this time. It is not as though the Cranes were Catholics, either; they always go to the Methodist Episcopal Church, you know.”

“Yes, Crane is all right in that direction. Well, I will think about it.”

“And I will write to Mrs. Robert Curtis to-morrow, and tell her the girls are going to school near New York, and Milly can pick up Amy and Florence on her way instead of their coming on here.”

“Very well, my dear,” and Mrs. Curtis

knew the battle was won, and she might commence her preparations for Milly's departure. It was very grand, she thought, to send her daughter to school with a young lady who kept her own maid—a Frenchmaid, too—for Augusta had brought one home with her from school, and as soon as Annette heard that Milly was to go back with them, she most obligingly offered to help Mrs. Curtis and her daughter in their preparations whenever her young mistress could spare her, and Augusta being quite willing to do this, Annette often found her way to Mrs. Curtis', and contrived to make herself so useful and so necessary to that lady that Mrs. Curtis took it into her head she must keep a maid to do her hair and trim her hats and alter her dresses. She could afford to do it, she argued, for Annette would

more than save her wages in dress-maker's bills, if only she could secure somebody as handy as Annette for the same wages Augusta paid her.

The obliging maid promised to make inquiries when she returned to the convent. They had an orphan school, she said, distinct from the ladies' school, and it might be that one of the girls educated there, as she had been, would be glad to take Mrs. Curtis' situation, unless Augusta would be willing to change maids when she got back, which Mrs. Curtis thought was very unlikely.

So the affair was settled, that a maid should be sent on approval, if one could be found. Just before they left, however, Mrs. Curtis heard that Mrs. Crane was likewise in want of a maid, and wished Annette to stay with her, but Augusta de-

clared she could not travel without her help, but she would send her back to her mother, if possible, if she could get another to take her place.

Meanwhile, the news had reached Amy and Florence Curtis that they were to go with their cousin to a convent school, and it caused them no small surprise at first. Their aunt's letter had been very quickly followed by one from their uncle, telling them that a school in the neighborhood of New York had been so strongly recommended by a young lady who had spent a year there, that he had decided to send his own daughter, and he wished them to go with her. They would be company for each other, he said, and the three together might mutually help each other if there should be any religious difficulty, which he did not anticipate, however, as

he had been assured that the most perfect liberty was allowed in this matter.

The widow herself seemed too much overcome with grief to feel either surprise or alarm at any thing that was proposed; and Florence, her younger daughter, was almost as broken-hearted as her mother.

Amy, however, who had always in some sort been a little mother to her sister, although only a year older, at once began discussing the plan with all its advantages and disadvantages.

“Look here, Florie, we shall have a capital chance for getting on with our music. I have always heard they take no end of pains with music at these convent schools, and if we can only become proficient in that, we might teach by and by, and keep mamma like a lady.”

“Yes, my dear; I am very glad you

will have a chance to learn properly now. I have no doubt your uncle has made every inquiry, or he would not send your cousin so far away from home—for a whole year, too.”

“Yes, mamma, I dare say he has ; but still I don't like that part of it. Fancy being a whole year without going to church.”

“Without going to church ! what do you mean, Amy ? Your uncle says there is perfect religious liberty.”

“Yes, I know, but still I don't believe that means that we shall be allowed to go to our own church or Sunday-school.”

“My dear, if I thought—but no, I am sure your uncle has quite satisfied himself upon this point, or your cousin would not be going there, and so I shall make myself quite easy about this matter, only

you must write to me very often, both of you."

"O yes, mamma, and you must write to us every week, at least," said Florence. "And tell us all about the church you go to, and the Sunday-school. I wonder whether they are the same in the South as here?" added Amy.

"I have no doubt they are, and if you do not go to Sunday-school yourselves, you might get a little class together and study the very same lessons as they are studying every-where else."

"O, so we might, Amy; we will get as many of the International Lesson papers as we can before we go, and mamma can send them on to us afterward."

"O yes, do mamma, and all the notes you can get as well. That was a good thought of yours, Florie, and we can learn

the Golden Text for every Sunday, as well as you, mamma. O, that will be nice." And Amy skipped round the room in the relief she felt at having discovered something that might be a fair substitute for her own much-loved Sunday class.

"My dear, you must write and tell me every thing about this convent school. I wish I could stay here a little longer, just to know how things are going on."

"O, things will go on beautifully now I have thought of our Sunday-school lessons," said Amy, anxious to allay the fears she had herself aroused.

"I hope they will let you all go to church—to some Protestant Church, I mean."

"Well, perhaps they will if there are a lot of Protestant girls there. At all events, they cannot make Catholics of us while

we have our Sunday-school papers to remind us of things, so be sure you don't forget, mother, to send us lots and lots—every thing you can get hold of that will explain the lessons to us, for fear we should have no other teacher.”

Mrs. Curtis gave the required promise, and proposed that they should go that very afternoon to the bookstore and buy what they could at once in the way of books and papers, that they might be ready for packing.

There was not much preparation needed beyond the purchase of a few more articles of under-clothing, for their dresses were all new, and would last them for some months, at least, if not the whole year. But Mrs. Curtis, who was to start for Richmond the day after her children left her, had visits to pay to old friends, and

business matters to settle that occupied her time and attention so much, that thoughts of the difficulties in the way of her girls at this convent school soon passed from her mind—for the present, at least.

It had been arranged that Mr. Curtis should bring Milly the day before that on which she was to arrive at school, that the cousins might become acquainted before going among strangers. Augusta Crane and her maid, Annette, who were traveling with them, were to stay at a hotel in the city during this time, for Mr. Curtis was not sufficiently taken with Augusta to propose taking her with them to his sister-in-law's, and when Milly saw what a small house her aunt lived in, she was very glad Augusta had not been invited.

She was quite prepared to like her cous-

ins from her father's description of them, but she was not going to give herself up exclusively to them. Augusta Crane should be her chosen companion and dear friend, she was resolved, although Augusta had given some signs on their journey of not being specially desirous of her company. She told Amy at once of this dear friend who kept a lady's maid to attend her, even at school, and Amy, being duly impressed by the unusual grandeur of her cousin's friend, Milly became even more friendly and confidential, and suggested that they should try and get rooms near each other. She had heard that the rules of the convent were that two young ladies should have a bedroom between them. She hoped to share Augusta Crane's, of course, and wished her cousins to be next to them if possible.

She did not have much to say to Florence. She seemed a poor, spiritless girl to Milly, but Amy might be useful by and by, and so the two girls laughed and chatted, exchanged confidences, and made plans for the future, so that all Mr. Curtis' fears for the future of his daughter and nieces were dispelled. If only the girls kept together and were on good terms with each other they would be all right, they would prove a mutual safeguard to each other, and no harm could happen to them. So that it was with the greatest satisfaction he saw Milly and Amy were mutually pleased with each other, for he knew that his nieces had been more carefully trained in many things than his own daughter, and possessed religious principles that were not so likely to give way before the stress of tempta-

tion as Milly's, and the last of his fears were set at rest when Amy assured him she would write to him as well as her mother and tell him how every thing was managed at this convent school.

CHAPTER III.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS.

MRS. CURTIS accompanied her brother-in-law and the girls to the convent. It was situated in a pretty little village a few miles from New York, and two or three from any railway station, but a carriage had been sent to meet the train, which would also convey Mr. and Mrs. Curtis back again, a piece of attention on the part of the convent authorities which Mr. Curtis thought very kind, but which was not altogether so disinterested as it seemed. With a carriage waiting at the gate to take them back, no one could make a very minute inspection of the establishment, and as any further visits were not

expected or encouraged, it is not strange that every thing seen at a cursory glance, should appear all that was desirable. They were received at the gate by a lay sister, and conducted through an outer court to a visitor's parlor. Beyond this Mr. Curtis was not invited to go, but Mrs. Curtis and the new pupils were taken to the Mother Superior's room, while Augusta and Annette, being met on their way by two of the other sisters, were carried off in another direction, the nuns saying the Superior would be glad to see Augusta after she had made the acquaintance of her new friends.

No one could fail to be impressed by the stately bearing and calm dignity of the Mother Superior, and yet it was blended with such a look of gentleness, of suffering meekness, it seemed to Mrs. Curtis, that

the widow's heart was won at once. No harm could come to her girls under such a guardianship, she felt sure, and she was quite disposed to receive every thing that was said as absolute truth. She had heard a good deal, too, about the ignorance and bigotry of Roman Catholics, but this room where the Superior received them bore ample evidence that some, at least, could appreciate the learning and culture of the outside world. Books on all sorts of sciences and subjects lay on the table, or were ranged in stands easy of access. Cabinets of mineral specimens and various curiosities stood invitingly open. Globes and maps, and an elegant piano, with pictures and a few choice specimens of sculpture likewise adorned the room, while there was little to suggest that this was the reception room of a nunnery.

After a little pleasant conversation had passed, the Lady Superior asked if Mrs. Curtis would like to inspect the school-rooms and sleeping-apartments of the scholars. This, of course, she was most anxious to do, and she ventured to prefer Milly's request, that the cousins might be as near together as possible.

The Superior smiled. "That is, of course, a very natural wish, and I will mention it to Sister Ursula, who has this department entirely under her charge."

As she said this she touched a small silver gong, and a lay sister at once appeared, a pleasant-faced young woman, almost as good to look at as the Superior herself.

"You will show this lady every thing she may desire to see, Sister Susan," said the Superior.*

* See Frontispiece.

Milly rose to go with her aunt, anxious to have some voice, if possible, in the selection of their rooms, but the Superior instantly said, "I should like you to stay with me, that we may get acquainted. Your aunt will not be long," she added, "for the carriage is waiting at the gate."

Mrs. Curtis hardly needed this hint, with her brother-in-law waiting in the outer parlor; but still she was resolved to see all she could, and followed her guide up a broad flight of stairs to the dormitories above.

No fault could be found with these. There was a little room partitioned off for each two girls, with a neat white bed, a chest of drawers, and a couple of chairs in each. There was a cross hanging over the head of each bed, and a life-size image of the Virgin at the upper end of the corridor,

but these need not interfere with her girls, she thought. Nothing could be better in the way of light and air, for the little chambers were but portions of one long, lofty room, the partitions being of the slightest description, and only about the height of a moderately tall person. Her guide explained that at one time curtains were used to divide the beds, but, to secure greater privacy for those who desired it, these partitions had been put up.

There was only one thing she could have wished altered, but she knew that at many boarding-schools it was a usual thing to have a common wash room, instead of a washing stand in each little bedroom, and so to this she made no demur. The wash room was at the further end of the corridor, and she could not fail to notice how Sister Susan paused for a moment before

the image of the Virgin, to mutter a few words and cross herself. She smiled at what she deemed such ignorant idolatry, and had little doubt that Amy would do the same at first, but that it would ever cause her any serious trouble never once crossed her mind.

Having looked at the washing room, with its rows of basins, taps, and towels, she went down stairs to see the school and class rooms, music rooms, refectory and playground. Having completed her tour of inspection, she went back to express her thanks to the Lady Superior for her courtesy, and the perfect confidence she felt in leaving her daughters under such guardianship.

The girls went with her to the outer parlor, to bid Mr. Curtis farewell, and it was no small comfort to him to hear from

her such a favorable report of the house and the lady who guided its affairs. There were a few tears shed when the lady and gentleman took their departure, but Amy resolutely checked back her sobs, for fear of distressing her mother, and turned to comfort and cheer her sister.

Sister Susan now told them to follow her to the school room, at the door of which an elderly nun met them and showed them where to put their hats and mantles, and then introduced them to their new school-fellows, about thirty of whom were already assembled in the school room. It was recreation time, and the girls were chattering away like so many magpies, despite the presence of two nuns, who sat at either end of the room.

There was a hushing of the chatter as the new-comers names were announced,

and Milly looked round, hoping to see Augusta come forward to meet and welcome her. But she could not see anything of her friend, and was turning toward Amy, feeling greatly disappointed, when one of the nuns came up and introduced herself as mistress-general of the school, and asked Milly her name, and where she came from, and hearing she was Miss Crane's friend, she called another girl from the further end of the room, and introduced her as Miss Raven.

"Miss Curtis is to be your room-mate, so you must be friends," she said, speaking to Miss Raven.

The young lady bowed and placed herself beside Milly. "I shall be very glad to help Miss Curtis. You must feel strange among us at first," she said, speaking to Milly.

“I have my two cousins with me, you see, so that I shall not feel so very lonely,” said Milly, drawing Amy close to her side.

Miss Raven smiled. “Of course it will make a difference, but as we are to be room-mates, you see—” she said, and then she paused.

“O, I shall be very glad if we can be friends, only you see I have not had time to see any body yet, and you may not like me when you know me better,” she added, laughing.

“I can always like those I am bidden to like,” she said.

“Yes, but no one has asked you to do that yet,” said Milly, boldly. She did not think she should like Miss Raven, and therefore she did not care if she was offended at her plain speaking. She would not have her for a room-mate, either, if she

could help it, that she was determined. She would see Augusta by and by, and ask her if they could not share a room together, as they were such old friends.

She was just whispering this determination to Amy, when the sound of a gong was heard from the mistress' desk, and in a moment every tongue was still, and the girls ranged themselves along the wall with almost military precision, all but one or two, who, like themselves, were new comers, and stood stock still, looking and feeling very foolish standing alone in the middle of that large room.

"New scholars follow the rest until they can learn to take their proper places," said the nun-mistress in a commanding tone.

Milly and Amy glanced round instinctively as they heard it, and something like

a shiver of fear passed over them. No one would ever dare to disobey that voice they thought, and the look of command that accompanied it was enough to awe the most rebellious into submission.

Miss Raven contrived to place herself between Milly and Amy as they walked into the refectory, and, of course, placed herself between the cousins at the table where tea had just been served. Milly frowned as she took her seat, but the remembrance of the stern tones of the nun-mistress' voice was sufficient to subdue her rising anger, although a glance at the slices of thick bread and butter, and watery-looking tea, made her turn up her nose as she thought of the well-spread table at home.

When all were in their places, a nun at the head of the table said grace, which oc-

cupied about five minutes, and then as soon as the girls were seated again began reading.

The strictest silence was enforced at the table, every thing that was needed being asked for by signs, that the girls' attention might not be distracted from the subject being read.

To-day it was upon the duty of obedience, and Amy, as she listened, could not but be startled by what she heard.

“That holy obedience may be perfect in us, in every point, in execution, in will, in intellect, doing whatever is enjoined us with all celerity, with spiritual joy and perseverance, *persuading ourselves that all is right, suppressing every repugnant thought of our own* in a sure obedience, and that, moreover, in all things which are determined by the Superior wherein it cannot

be defined, as is said, any kind of sin appears. And let every one persuade himself that they who live under obedience should permit themselves to be moved and directed under Providence by their Superiors, just as if they were a corpse which allows itself to be moved and handled in any way, or as the staff of an aged man which serves him wherever, and in whatever things he who holds it in his hand pleases to use it. Thus obedient he should execute any thing on which the Superior chooses to employ him with cheerfulness of mind, and altogether believe that he will answer the divine will better in that way than in any other which he can follow in compliance with his own will and different judgment." *

When tea was over, and the mistress

* The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus.

announced that there would be an hour's recess instead of the usual lessons, Amy contrived to whisper to Milly, "Did you listen to the reading at tea-time?"

"I heard a little of it. But did you ever eat such stale bread before, Amy, and the butter—well I don't believe it was butter at all," she added, with a gesture of disgust.

"Well, it wasn't very good, certainly, but it was better than the obedience that book teaches," said Amy, laughing.

"What fault have you to find with what Sister Cecilia read," asked Miss Raven quietly.

"Well, it says I am to have no will, no feeling, no conscience of my own, but do exactly as the Superior tells me, as though I were a corpse or stick," said Amy.

"And would not that be the perfection

of obedience—the making a total surrender of ourselves to God.”

“There is not a word about God in it,” said Amy; “it is to the Superior I am to yield this obedience.”

“But the Superior claims it of us as a proof of our devotion to God,” said Miss Raven, quickly.

“Then according to this book she stands in the place of God to us, and demands of us even more than God himself does.”

“How can you say such things, Miss Curtis. Are we not taught every-where to make a perfect surrender of ourselves to the will of God. But I am forgetting. You are not of the true Church Catholic, and can know nothing of this sweet compulsion of obedience. O that you did, how many sorrows and trials you would be spared!” said Miss Raven, fervently.

"I have been thinking something like this, lately," put in Florie, the tears coming into her eyes as she spoke. "Perhaps if I had yielded myself a willing sacrifice to the will of God in every thing, poor dear papa might have been spared to us for many years longer."

"Very likely," said Miss Raven, quickly. "Nothing but the most perfect obedience in every thing can ever gain for us the favor of God."

"I know that God requires our obedience, but the Bible says it is a 'reasonable service,' and we are to be living sacrifices, not corpses and sticks," said Amy with equal warmth.

"Don't quarrel about things nobody can understand," said Milly, with a yawn.

"But I can understand this, that the obedience required by this book is so

blind, so unreasoning, that I could never be obedient after this pattern," said Amy.

"That is because you have never learned the humility necessary. It is hard to give up our own proud will and reason about things," said Miss Raven.

"I never could give up my reason," said Amy. "God gave it me to use—to judge between things right and wrong."

"Ah! but how can you judge, how can you know whether a thing is right or wrong if you are not guided by some one wiser—some infallible judge?"

"There are many things we hardly know what to think about, whether they are right or wrong," said Florie, with something of a sigh.

"You have felt the unrest of doubt and difficulty if your sister has not," said Miss Raven.

"Yes, I have been puzzled to know what to think about some things, especially since poor papa died," confessed Florie.

"Well, but you know right from wrong in most things; you know that if any one should order you to tell a lie, for instance, you have no business to do it," said Amy.

"Well, nobody would tell another to commit sin, and call that obedience to God," said Florie.

"We have no right to set up our judgment as to what is sin in the matter of obedience," said Miss Raven. "We cannot suppose that our Superior would order us to do any thing sinful. If it seems so to us, it is because we cannot understand all about it, and the good it is likely to effect, and, therefore, we must, with mod-

esty, think that we have erred in our thoughts, and with true humility defer to the judgment of our Superior as right, whatever it may seem to us in our pride of natural reason."

"Then you mean to say we ought to sin if the Superior orders us to do it," said Amy bluntly.

"No, the Superior would never order us to commit a sin, because it could not be a sin to yield perfect obedience to her commands, whatever they might be, but the more repugnant they were to my own feelings and reason and judgment, the more merit there would be in obeying it."

"Then if the Superior ordered you to tell a lie, you wouldn't mind doing it, Miss Raven," said Milly, bluntly.

"I don't know what you mean, Miss Curtis," said Miss Raven, drawing herself

up. "We were talking about obedience. I think, however, we have said enough for the present," she added, but she did not leave the cousins to discuss the subject further between themselves, but began talking about their lessons, and asking Milly how far she had advanced in the various branches of study.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONVENT SCHOOL.

TO Milly's surprise and disappointment she saw nothing of Miss Crane during this recreation time, but it was explained before she went to bed, for she heard, to her most profound astonishment, that Augusta was in another division of the school—that specially set apart for the novices, or those who were preparing to take the veil as nuns.

“But Augusta cannot be a novice—she is not going to be a nun; she is Protestant, like ourselves,” said Milly, as soon as she could find her tongue.

“Hush! here is Sister Cecilia, and it's best not to talk about being Protestants”

here," said the girl who had given her the information about Augusta.

Sister Cecilia was close at their side, and the girl, turning to her, said, "This young lady has been asking about our needle-work, sister, and I have been telling her there is little time for any thing but study here."

The nun looked at Milly, and Milly at the girl who had uttered this bare-faced falsehood, but Sister Cecilia only said, "The mistress-general will appoint your class presently," and passed on.

"How could you tell such a story?" said Milly, as soon as she was out of hearing.

The girl laughed. "You are shocked at it, are you? Well, I was at first, but you'll soon find out that it's the only way to get on here; only be careful how you do it with the Raven." The last words were

spoken in a whisper, for Miss Raven had only left them a minute or two, and was coming toward them again.

“Bother Miss Raven! I shall tell her I don’t want her,” said Milly, in an under tone.

“No, no; don’t do that. We can speak sometimes, perhaps, but we return to discipline to-morrow,” and the girl heaved a sigh as she turned away to make room for Miss Raven.

When the hour’s recreation was over the girls were summoned to the school room, where the old scholars took their places at their desks to prepare their lessons for the next day, while the mistress-general went through something like an examination of the new scholars’ attainments, and appointed them to their different classes.

The two sisters were appointed to dif-

ferent classes, and Milly to a third, apart from either. Amy was dismayed when she heard the mistress-general's decision, for she had already heard that the different classes were kept as much apart as possible, and the individuals—even sisters and relatives—only allowed to speak to each other under certain restrictions and at stated times. They rarely saw each other, except at a distance, and had meals and slept and studied entirely apart.

To be separated from tender-hearted Florie in this way was almost agony to Amy, and she braved the mistress-general's stern look and imperious voice, and begged that she might be put into Florie's class, even though it should be lower than her own.

The nun looked at her with some astonishment for a minute or two, but said at

length, "My poor child, you know little of true obedience, I fear."

"Indeed, indeed, ma'am, I will be very obedient if you will let me stay with Florie," said Amy, imploringly. "Our papa died only a little while ago, and my sister has fretted a good deal, and—"

"That is enough, child," said the nun, coldly. "I will see that your sister has a suitable companion," and she turned away to prevent any thing further being said.

Amy threw herself down upon a seat and burst into a storm of angry sobs and tears. Florie was crying, too, but more quietly, more resignedly than her sister. For a little while the sisters were left to indulge their grief unrestrainedly. The mistress-general had left them now in charge of Sister Cecilia and another nun, but neither of them took any notice of the

two girls for some time, but at last a gentle-looking girl was sent to sit beside Florie, and soon afterward another asked if she might speak to Amy.

"It is a great breach of discipline," said the nun, very severely, "but, as we do not return to our usual order until to-morrow, I will permit it, as a great indulgence, Miss Carey."

So Miss Carey seated herself beside Amy, and whispered, "Don't cry ; you will soon get over it, and in our happy community forget all your troubles."

"But Florie and I have never been separated, and it seems so cruel," sobbed Amy.

"Every body says that at first, but they soon get used to it," said Miss Carey.

"Do they always separate sisters, then?" asked Amy.

“It is not often that sisters can be in the same class, you know, and so there is no help for it; but I am to share your room, Sister Ursula says, and perhaps I can help you to speak to your sister sometimes—I will if I can, but you mustn’t tell, for the rules about this are very strict.”

“I don’t care for the rules, I will speak to my sister,” muttered Amy, defiantly.

Miss Carey looked sorry, but she was getting used to such scenes as these, and she had no doubt that Amy’s grief would wear itself out in an hour or two, or a day or two at the most, and the sisters would be content with the friends that had been appointed for them. Not that there was any close friendship between any of the girls; that was not allowed. No two girls were allowed to converse together, or walk together, even in recreation time.

They might play or talk in groups, but there must be no caressing—no putting their arms round each other's waists, as girls love to do ; no getting into corners and enjoying a quiet laugh or chat, and no romping allowed.

Of course Amy knew nothing of all this yet, and at last she dried her eyes, comforting herself with the thought that she and Florie would spend their recreation time together. When bed-time came, however, it was a fresh grief to see Florie marched to another dormitory. She had not seen her little chamber until now, and was surprised to find that her box was not there, and she said something of this to her companion.

"Sister Catharine has charge of our boxes, and will help us unpack to-morrow," said Miss Carey.

“I don’t want any help,” said Amy, rather ungraciously. She had been asked if she had a night-dress in her hand-bag, and hearing that she had not, Sister Catharine had placed one on her bed, but in her present mood she declared she would not wear it, and sat down declaring she would not go to bed.

In five minutes, however, the door was thrown back, and Sister Ursula, looking scarcely less stern than the mistress-general herself, appeared in the door-way. “How is this? I have heard talking, when there should be perfect silence, and you are not in bed, Miss Curtis.”

“I want my own night-dress,” said Amy, sulkily.

“You can have it to-morrow—as soon as Sister Catharine can help you to unpack.”

"I would rather unpack by myself," said Amy.

"My child, you have come here to learn obedience, and—must I say it—we insist upon its practice."

Amy saw it would be useless to resist further, and so began to undress, seeing which the nun passed on to open every other door, and then, slowly pacing up and down the room, she began reading or reciting a form of prayer to the Virgin.

This lasted about half an hour, and by that time most of the girls were asleep, and the gas was turned off; but Amy was too unhappy to fall asleep very soon to-night, and, as she lay awake thinking of Florie, and crying softly to herself, she could hear the slow, muffled sounds of footsteps pacing up and down, and once her door was opened, and the almost

blinding light of a dark lantern turned full upon her.

Nothing of this seemed to disturb Miss Carey, but Amy felt very uncomfortable. Not for one moment since she had been in the house had she been free from the espionage of the nuns, and it seemed that at night as well as day, sleeping as well as waking, was this ceaseless watch kept up.

But even Amy forgot her annoyance at last, and slept as soundly as the rest, until a bell rang, when Miss Carey instantly jumped out of bed.

Amy did not feel disposed to move at once, but her companion quickly roused her.

"You must make haste," she whispered, "we have only five minutes to dress, and then we must take our places to go to the wash room."

"O dear, what a bother getting up is when you feel tired," said Amy, with a yawn. "I wonder—"

"Hush, no talking is allowed," whispered Miss Carey, warningly. But the sister in charge had already heard the sound of voices, and presented herself at the door.

"I must send your names to the Spiritual Mother if the rule of silence is broken again," she said.

Amy had barely time to get all her clothes on when the bell rang again, and every girl stood outside her room door, and then, at a given signal, moved slowly down the corridor in single file. Before the image of the Virgin each paused for a moment, crossed herself, and murmured a few words of prayer. Amy was almost the only one who passed it without this reverence, but no notice was taken of her

omission, and she passed on to her wash basin, merely looking round in search of Milly and Florie.

She saw her cousin, but under the strict rule of silence had no opportunity of speaking to her, and the time allowed for washing did not admit of it either. When this was over they marched back to their bedrooms, in the same order, to make their beds, and put any little finishing touches to their attire they might wish, and the rule of silence was so far relaxed that they might talk to their companions in a low voice, but there must be no shouting, and no visiting each other's rooms. A confused Babel of sounds and hum of voices prevailed for the next quarter of an hour. Amy availed herself of the privilege by asking her companion when she should see her sister.

Miss Carey smiled at her impatience. "We may see her as we go down," she said; "but you must not try to speak to her then."

"Not to ask how she is? I am afraid she will fret in this strange place."

"It will not be strange long. You will like it by and by, as the rest of us do," said Miss Carey.

But Amy shook her head very decidedly. "I can never like being watched as we are here," she said.

"But why need you mind that if you are always obedient?"

"Because it seems like suspicion—as though we were not to be trusted; as though we should get into mischief and do wrong every minute."

"And are we not evil until we have learned true obedience? Have we not

just left a world of wickedness and sin? A few of us, who desire to join the religious of this holy house, having learned the evil that is in the world, might, perhaps, be trusted, but for the rest — well, there is no other way, I suppose, or the good sisters would certainly have found it out.”

“Do you know Miss Crane? She is one of the novices, I hear.”

“Ah! she has been highly favored,” said Miss Carey, almost in a tone of envy. “She is to be a religious, I hear, as soon as she is eighteen.”

“I cannot understand it. Her friends do not even know that she is a Roman Catholic. My cousin told me she always went to a Protestant Church when she was at home lately.”

“Very likely our Mother Superior bade her do so,” answered Miss Carey.

"But that was deceiving her parents, and every body else. Would your Superior teach a girl to be deceitful?" asked Amy, forgetting for the moment the lesson on obedience she had heard the previous evening.

Miss Carey had heard nothing of the argument that followed, and answered quickly, "Our Superior could not tell us to do wrong; it cannot be wrong to obey in all things."

"Well, I should think it wrong to deceive my mamma, if I were Miss Crane."

"We have no right to set up our poor sinful judgment against one who cannot err, who has been commissioned and set over us by the one infallible Church. It is the Church we obey, and we have no right to question her commands, whatever they may be."

"What! Is a girl to deceive her mother and think she is doing right?"

"She is doing a good work if the Church command it, if what is desired to be done can be done in no other way; and the more painful it is, the more she has to fight against her own judgment in this matter, the more merit does she obtain by doing it."

There was not time to say any more, for the bell rang again, and, taking their places at the door as before, but facing the other way, the girls moved forward.

"We are going to chapel now," Miss Carey had contrived to whisper, as they took their places, and Amy felt delighted, for surely now, as neither she or Florie would be going to chapel, they would have a few minutes to themselves.

A lay sister was in charge of each class,

and as they passed down stairs into the corridor, Amy contrived to say, "My sister and cousin are Protestants; we do not go to chapel."

"Pass on," was all the answer Amy received, and she went on to the very door of the little chapel, where she could see the nuns were already kneeling before a statue of the Virgin.

With a glance at the altar, however, she turned away, and a lay sister motioned her to stand back against the wall. In a minute or two all the girls who were going had passed through, and about half a dozen were left standing in the dimly-lighted passage, in the charge of three lay sisters.

In defiance of their presence Amy attempted to walk some twenty yards back to where Florie was standing, but was at

once ordered to stand still. No one else attempted to move or speak, although Amy could see that Milly was casting angry and defiant looks at the lay sister. But they might as well have been cast at the opposite wall. Each sister had taken out a book, and seemed to be following the service going on inside the chapel, kneeling and crossing themselves, and bowing every few minutes, but still keeping a watchful eye on their prisoners.

For nearly an hour were they kept standing here, until at last the girls grew so restless, and fidgeted so much, standing first upon one foot and then another, by way of recreation, that one of the sisters threatened to report them to the Spiritual Mother.

To their inexpressible relief the chapel door opened at last, and the girls streamed

out in single file. Amy was glad to see Miss Carey again, and took her place just in front most readily. She passed close enough to Milly and Florie to touch them, but she only ventured to nod, a warning touch from Miss Carey informing her that she must not attempt more just now.

From chapel they went to the school room, where they studied their lessons in silence for an hour, but Amy not having had any given her to learn, was directed to go with a lay sister, who would give her a book from the library to read.

"What book would you like?" asked the sister.

Amy looked round the book-shelves. This school library was not a very extensive one, but Amy thought there would certainly be a Bible for the use of the scholars, and ventured to ask for it, as

her own was locked up in her trunk, which had not as yet been opened.

The sister looked up, too much astonished to give a direct reply. "You can have any book there is here," she said.

"Then you haven't got a Bible, I suppose. Well, it doesn't matter much, I'll take another book," and Amy looked all along the shelves to make a selection, but could find nothing to her taste. The library, for the most part, consisted of the "lives" of different Romish saints and heavy theological works. At last Amy lighted upon something that, from its title, seemed to be written for children and young people, and, noticing the selection she had made, the sister commended her choice.

"That is a most excellent book, that every body ought to read," said the lay

sister; "it is written by a distinguished English priest."

It being written by a priest did not recommend it specially to Amy, but, as the cover bore the imprint, "Books for Children and Young Persons," she thought she might as well take it, and so carried it with her to the school room.

Opening it as soon as she reached her desk, she almost shuddered at the title of one of the tracts—for it was made up of about a dozen smaller books or tracts—and one of these was "The Sight of Hell."

Amy looked over the titles of the chapters of this book. Some of them were, "The Swell of Death," "The Soul before Satan," "A Bed of Fire," "The Boiling Kettle," "A Red-hot Oven," and then she went on to read some of the awful de-

scriptions given under these titles of the pains suffered by lost souls.

But it was too dreadful, too horrible, to be read calmly, and, shutting the book, Amy buried her face in her hands and burst into tears. One of the nuns on guard at once came to inquire what was the matter, and, seeing the book she had been reading, offered to take her to the Spiritual Mother, but Amy shook her head.

“Well, I hope you will not forget what you have been reading,” said the sister, as she left her.

CHAPTER V.

VAIN RESISTANCE.

AMY did not pay much attention to the reading at breakfast time. She was hungry, and not at all inclined to find fault with the good plain food set before her, but she could see that Milly was dreadfully disappointed that nothing but stale bread, hominy, and porridge was set upon the table. It was a comfort to her to see her sister eat her breakfast with some appetite, and when it was over, and she was summoned to attend Sister Catharine to unpack her trunk, she felt almost happy at the thought of having Florie to herself for a few minutes.

“My darling, how did you sleep?” she

whispered, slipping her arm round Florie's waist, as they followed the lay sister to the box room.

But Florie had been told that such endearments, even between sisters, were against the true obedience taught here, and she seemed half afraid of Amy's demonstrative affection.

But Amy was too pleased to notice this now, and they had soon reached the end of the corridor, and pointed out which was their trunk to Sister Catharine, who was waiting to receive them.

The box was soon unlocked, and Amy, who was determined to unpack for herself, was kneeling in front, lifting the things out, when Sister Catharine interrupted her.

"This is your sister's box, I suppose," she said, pointing to the other trunk.

"No, our things are all together in both," said Amy. "Mamma thought we should have a room to ourselves, and so she packed them as she thought would be most convenient for us. That trunk is half full of books."

"Books!" uttered the nun; "you do not want books."

"O, but we do," said Amy, and then she proceeded to lift out a pile of clothes and hand them to Florie. "Those are yours, dear," she said. "Will you take them to your room?"

"Put them down, Miss Florence. I must give out your clothes as you need them, and you do not need all these at once," said Sister Catharine, and she came to the side of the trunk to inspect what Amy was lifting out. "You only need one garment of each sort," she said, as she

lifted one from the pile Amy had laid out.

Amy stared as the nun put these aside, saying, "These can go back in the trunk again."

"May we not do as we like with our own clothes?" demanded Amy.

"Yes, certainly, Miss Curtis, but you are here to learn obedience, and it must be learned in little things first if it is to be practiced in greater by and by.

"But—but not to have my own clothes," said Amy, almost crying with vexation.

Florie came to her side to speak a word of comfort. "Never mind, Amy; what does it matter where our clothes are kept? I'm sure I don't care."

"Well, I do, and I don't like it, and I shall write and tell mamma and Uncle John to fetch us home."

Amy quite intended to carry out this threat, and so the further unpacking of this trunk was a matter of indifference to her; but she would have a few books out of the other, she thought, and so, leaving the first trunk to Florie and Sister Catharine, she unlocked the other, and proceeded to lift out first their winter dresses, and then the books that were underneath them.

"It is a pity to touch those books," said the lay sister, who was there to assist.

"I am going to take these to my room," said Amy, lifting out a pile of her Sunday-school lesson books and papers, and placing her Bible at the top.

Sister Catharine calmly laid her hand upon Amy's shoulder. "You are here to learn obedience, my child, and we must have proof that you are willing to learn



Amy's Indignation at not being allowed to have her Books
to Read.

the holy lesson we strive to teach; and so we make rules that to you may seem strange, but they are wise and good, and we say you must obey them whether you understand or not."

"But what has that to do with my books?" asked Amy, looking from them to the nun's calm face.

"The rule of our house is that nothing but one suit and one set of clothes is allowed in the bedrooms."

"But—but where am I to keep my books, and my desk and work-box?" asked Amy.

"The paper and pens can be taken to your class room, and put in your own desk there. They will be quite safe, and you will always write your letters there. The work-box you have little need for. You may take out a few needles and a

spool of cotton, and any thing further you may want I will give you."

"But the books?" said Amy, in a tone of despair.

"They must go back into the box. Put them in at once, Miss Curtis; I have no wish to touch them," said the nun, in a tone which Amy knew she dare not disobey.

"I don't know what I am to do if you take my books away from me," said Amy, almost crying again.

"I do not take them from you. They are in your own charge—in your own trunk; you can lock it yourself and take the key with you."

"May I come here and get the books when I want them?" asked Amy.

Sister Catharine stared as she heard the bold question. "This room is always

locked," she said, "and will not be opened again for some weeks, I hope.

"Then I must have my Bible," said Amy, making a sudden dash for it, as the lid of the trunk was about to close.

Sister Catharine set it wide open again. "I must send for the Spiritual Mother, Miss Curtis," she said.

"But why may I not have my own Bible? Every body believes in that."

"Of course we do," said Sister Catharine calmly; "we prize it so much that we are anxious to teach willful girls the true devotion the Bible itself teaches."

"Then why may I not have it to learn this true devotion for myself?" asked Amy.

"Because you are not capable of learning it unaided; because, through the mistakes that have been made in its transla-

tion, and from other causes, it is not a safe book to be placed in the hands of the unlearned—of any, in fact, but those ordained and commissioned by the Church to teach its true meaning. Did you ever hear it was taught in the Bible that young girls knew better what was good for them than those who, being older and wiser, were set over them?”

“O Amy, do give it up!” said Florie, in a tearful whisper. “I am afraid we have been too fond of having our own way in every thing, and would not learn the true obedience, and that is why papa has been taken away.”

Amy kissed her sister tenderly, but still held fast to her Bible. “I am not sure that I ought to give it up at all,” she said.

“If you have learned any thing from it while you have had it, you must know

that it teaches young people to obey those who are set over them. I am afraid you have learned little good from it, or you would not cause this unseemly strife by setting up your will against the rules of this holy house."

Amy remembered with a sudden pain the temper she had shown the previous night and again this morning. The nun was right, she thought; she had given little proof of that gentle meekness she had set herself to learn, and, with a downcast look, she placed the Bible in the trunk again, locked it slowly and tearfully, and then silently carried the few clothes she was allowed to retain to her own room.

Florie took her share, and now for the first time the sisters knew where each other was sleeping.

The few clothes were soon placed in the

drawers, and then the lay sister took them to the school room.

Once in school, and engaged upon her lessons, Amy soon forgot her various causes of annoyance, and felt almost vexed when the bell rang a short time afterward for them to go to the playground.

This was divided into three portions, not by a wall or hedge, but by two paths, and up and down each of these walked two lay sisters to watch that the classes did not mix during play-time. Amy felt disconsolate enough when she saw this arrangement. It had been disregarded the day before, because they had not returned to discipline, but now the rules were strictly enforced, and many of the girls stood about looking wistfully across at friends on the other side of the intersecting paths, or casting angry glances at the sentinels,

who were constantly walking back and forth.

Amy stood still, watching Florie walking up and down with her room-mate and another girl. She was looking tearful and unhappy, and the girls seemed to be talking earnestly, but Amy could not hear what was said, but she comforted herself with the thought that this state of things would not last long. She would write to her mother upon the first opportunity, and until she could come and fetch them she must wait, and be as patient as she could.

She thought over all that had happened during the last few hours, and blamed herself very bitterly for the impatience and ill temper she had shown. Sister Catharine might well ask how much she had profited by reading the Bible, when

she saw so little proof of its having made her gentle and patient and forbearing. How she wished she might run up stairs now, and pour out her trouble to her Father in heaven, who is ever ready to hear the cry of the weakest of his children. But no one was allowed to leave the playground until recreation time was over, so Amy lifted up her heart in silent prayer for a minute, standing where she was.

She was roused from this the next minute by seeing Milly enter by another door and dash across her own allotment of the playground to her side.

"Amy, Amy, I wont put up with it!" she cried, regardless of all eyes being turned upon her.

"They have taken your books away, I suppose," said her cousin.

"My books and pictures and dresses,

and every pretty thing I brought with me, and Augusta told me we were treated like ladies. I call it shameful to treat girls like this," and Milly burst into a storm of angry sobs and tears.

The sentinels on duty evidently thought they had better ignore her presence for a little while, until this had somewhat subsided, and so she was allowed to pour out her griefs unrestrainedly to her cousin.

It seemed that Milly had been bent upon having the prettiest bedroom in the convent, and had brought pictures and photographs and little brackets and vases, and all these trifles in which her soul delighted had been consigned to the trunks again, Sister Catharine actually making her put back with her own hands those she had insisted upon taking out.

A group of girls had gathered around

to hear the outpouring of Milly's trouble, and each tried to say something to soothe and comfort her.

"We all have to go through it in turn," said one.

"Sister Catharine gets used to all sorts of heroics of that sort over the first unpacking," said another.

"You see it is of no use doing either the pathetic or the passionate here, we've all got to be formed on the same model, and we may as well take it quietly, and let the good sisters have their way, for they will have it in spite of every thing, you may be sure of that."

"Good sisters, indeed!" repeated Milly, indignantly. "I don't call them good; they are a set of artful, deceitful, wicked women, that's what they are!" and she darted a furious glance at the two placid-

looking sentinels who were silently pacing up and down the path close by.

“Hush, hush,” said one or two warningly.

“I don’t care, I wont hush, they shall know what I think of them before I go—mean, suspicious, hateful things!”

“Come, Milly, don’t call names,” said Amy. “I don’t like the place or the people a bit, but I cannot say that I think them wicked. Every thing is so different from what we have ever been used to that—”

“Yes, that’s it,” interrupted another girl. “Nobody ever likes it at first, but we get used to it, and don’t mind after a little while.”

“If I could only see Augusta,” sighed Milly.

“We don’t see much of the novices except in chapel, and those who teach music.”

"Who does teach music?" asked Amy; not that she felt very anxious about this now, for she had resolved to write and ask her mother to fetch them away as soon as possible.

"Sister Magdalen teaches some, and one or two of the novices as well. We give a good deal of time to music—at least most of us do," added the girl, significantly.

Before they left the playground to resume their studies the lay sister in charge of Milly's class took care to tell her that such a breach of discipline as she had been guilty of could not be passed over again. Milly only shook herself, however, and muttered something about speaking to her cousin whenever she pleased, a remark that the sister did not forget, although she appeared not to hear it at the time.

Study was resumed again when they

left the playground, and continued until twelve o'clock ; then the girls were marched in single file and the strictest silence to the lavatory, where they might wash their hands and brush their hair, and the rule of silence was so far relaxed that a girl might speak in an undertone to her neighbor—a privilege the girls were not slow to avail themselves of, for the pleasure of hearing their own voices was so restricted they were not likely to let any opportunity slip where they could indulge it. Half an hour was allowed for this washing, and they then marched to the refectory to dinner, the reading being varied for this meal by legends of the lives of the saints being read aloud.

After dinner came recreation in the playground again, when care was taken that no girl should pass the boundary lines,

as Milly had done in the morning; for such an example, if repeated, might bring about general insubordination, for the rule was unpopular enough even among the most obedient girls.

At two they returned to the school-room for half an hour's general study under the mistress-general, and then the classes went off to their own special rooms, or the music room.

Amy would have been delighted with her music lesson and teacher anywhere else. Even as it was, it was an hour of almost unmixed enjoyment, for Sister Magdalen was a passionate lover of music herself, and spoke such appreciative words in praise of Amy's few excellences, and pointed out her faults so gently and patiently, that Amy heaved a sigh of regret when the lesson was over.

“My sister Florie is more clever than I am, and loves music so very dearly that—that if you could teach her, it would comfort her, I think, and draw her mind away from her grief.” Amy said this as she rose from the music-stool, for she felt so anxious that her sister should have the benefit of this excellent teacher’s instruction.

“You have lately lost your father, I think,” said Sister Magdalen in a compassionate tone.

“Yes, and poor little Florie seems to be taking up the notion that she is in some way to blame for it; but it is quite a mistake, for she is such a dear, gentle girl, and so yielding and anxious to please every body.”

“I will give her a lesson myself, dear child; and speak a word to comfort her, too, if I can.”

"O thank you, thank you! Florie will do you more credit than I shall," and Amy went away feeling quite happy in the thought that she had secured a friend for her sister in their excellent music teacher.

When lessons were over for the afternoon there was another recreation time in the playground, and then the girls marched to the refectory again for supper. After supper they passed on to the chapel for prayers, which lasted about a quarter of an hour. After this the classes marched to their own class-rooms for night study, during which no one was allowed to speak, not even to ask the solution of a difficulty of a neighbor or the nuns in charge. The lessons were those that had been set by the different teachers for the next day, and an hour was allowed for their preparation. After this followed another recrea-

tion time, during which the girls might sit at their desks and draw, or read, or write letters, or talk to each other in a low tone. This lasted half an hour, and then they returned to the chapel for night prayers, those who chose to absent themselves waiting in silence outside the chapel door. From the chapel they marched in silence to the dormitories, and thus ended our friends' first day at the convent school.

CHAPTER VI.

SUNDAY AT THE CONVENT.

ONE day was very much like another, so far as lessons and recreation and meals were concerned, but the nuns were good teachers, and, in spite of the monotony of all the arrangements, Amy found the numerous restrictions less irksome than she had expected.

She had made up her mind to write to her mother the very first opportunity, but she was told that no letters would be sent out to friends until they had been there a week—an arrangement that caused a fresh outburst of passionate complaint from Milly. Her cousin tried to whisper a word of comfort when she had the opportunity.

“Be patient, dear; it can’t last long. I am writing a long letter to mamma, a little bit every day, telling her all about everything. You do the same.”

Milly brightened up at this proposal. “I will,” she whispered, “and on Sunday you can tell me what you have said.”

The girls had heard that on Sunday, during recreation time, sisters and relatives were allowed to walk and talk together in the playground, under the supervision of the sisters in charge, and Amy was looking forward to spending this hour with Florie, so that she did not very cordially desire that Milly should be with them all the time. She wondered what they would do all that day. Her pleasant dreams of having Sunday class were quite at an end, and she wanted to talk to Florie about this, and try if they could not hit upon a plan

of repeating the golden texts they had learned sometimes when they met, a text that should remind each other of some truth, or express their own wants and desires and difficulties.

Amy's, just now, was the question of private prayer. Not a minute was she alone, not a single opportunity did she have of kneeling down and pouring out her heart before God. Never in her life before had she felt the urgent need for prayer as she now did. Her soul was longing and crying with a dumb but yearning cry for help in her great need, and she felt sure that Florie must be feeling the same, and she thought that together they might arrange some plan for their mutual help.

But who shall describe the pain and astonishment she felt when Sunday morning

came, and her sister passed her with drooping head and averted face into the chapel? Amy thought she had made a mistake, and was darting after her to hold her back, but the sister in charge prevented her. Then she thought she must have been mistaken, and looked anxiously back along the corridor to see who were standing there. Only three, including herself, and Milly and Florie were not there.

It seemed as though that Sunday morning service would never come to an end to the weary girls waiting outside. There were prayers and full mass, and a sermon afterward, and all through that time Amy and her companions stood with weary limbs and aching back. The sisters keeping guard over them used their books and beads, and occasionally knelt, but otherwise shared in their victims' penance, so

that no complaint could be made about the hardship on this score.

At last the dreary waiting time was over, and the girls came out of chapel. There was a little walk in the playground first, and then dinner. After dinner came the hour looked forward to by a good many, when they could walk and talk with their friends who were in another class. Amy and Milly met the moment it was permitted, but Florie seemed to hang back from meeting her sister now, and when she came her new friend was with her.

The moment she drew near them Milly exclaimed, "Florie, I am ashamed of you; how could you do such a thing!"

"Hush," said Amy; "I am going to speak to Florie about that."

"If it's about her going to mass, Sister

Ursula says you are not to interfere—you are allowed to do as you please, and she is to do the same,” put in her friend.

“Amy, how could I help it?” said Florie, the tears filling her eyes as she spoke. “I really could not stand such a long time, and then—and then it seems so dreadful never to worship God at all.”

“So it is, dear,” said Amy, kissing her tenderly; “it is hard not to be able to go to church, or have our own dear Sunday-school, as we talked about; but still you know, darling, we can worship God in spirit, and—”

“O, Miss Curtis! how can you talk about worshiping God, when you always stand outside the door, and refuse to enter the place where he is waiting to receive our adoration.”

“I was talking to my sister, Miss Glad-

ding. We do not belong to the same Church, and therefore cannot be expected to see things in the same way," said Amy, quietly.

"No; but we worship the same God, and I should have thought if people were anxious to serve him they would not be so particular where it was, and stay away and behave like heathen always, as though there were no God at all. Your sister has more conscience in this matter than you seem to have," added Miss Gladding.

"Well, I don't know what you do in chapel, of course; but all we hear about in school, and the reading in the refectory, is the Virgin and saints, and you worship them more than you worship God," said Milly, quickly.

"O no, we do not; at least, I mean, it is a different kind of worship, and you would

understand the difference if you were not Protestants."

"Do you think you understand it yourself?" asked Milly, mischievously. "It seems to be all mixed up in the same prayer Miss Raven often says, a prayer which she says will give her an indulgence of one hundred days, or lessen her time in purgatory, I suppose:

"'Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul.

"'Jesus, Mary, Joseph, assist me in my last agony.

"'Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I breathe out my soul to you in peace.'

"Now, where is the difference in the worship offered to our Lord Jesus Christ, and that offered to his mother and Joseph?"

"We do not believe it is right to wor-

ship any but God. We have but one Mediator between God and man, our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ," said Amy, quickly.

"There was a long litany to the saints this morning," said Florie, timidly; "but Miss Gladding said I need not join in that if I did not like. It began, 'St. Lawrence, pray for us; St. Vincent, pray for us,' and there were a good many saints I had never heard of before."

"And you would better not go to hear about them again," interrupted Milly, "or they will be making you a novice, as they have Augusta Crane."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Curtis, every one is at liberty to do as she pleases here. I am sure that no one forced your cousin to go to chapel this morning; but her heart is too tender—she is too anxious to learn something of the true obedience which we

owe to God, to stay outside the chapel door."

"And then the music is so lovely. O, Amy! do come next Sunday; it is like being in heaven to hear the nuns sing."

"I hope we shall be far away from here before next Sunday," said Milly; "and that reminds me, we have not talked about our letters yet. Have you written, Florie?"

"Yes, just a little short one, saying we—we are getting used to the place, and—"

"And want to get out of it," laughed Milly.

"It would be of no use saying that—that letter would not go," said Florie.

"What do you mean?" asked Amy and Milly in the same breath.

Miss Gladding smiled at their evident dismay. "I thought you knew that we do not seal our own letters," she said.

"Not seal our own letters! Who does it, then?"

"We hand them to Sister Ursula when they are ready, and—"

"I wont do it! I wont submit to such tyranny. I'll write to papa and tell him all about it," burst forth Milly, passionately.

"I can't believe they would stop our letters," said Amy, rather more quietly, but still in a very anxious tone.

"Stop them! O dear, no!" said Miss Gladding; "at least, not if they are suitable letters."

"We are not babies; we know how to write suitable letters, I should think," said Milly.

"Sister Ursula must judge of that for herself," said Miss Gladding.

"But does she ever refuse to send a girl's

letter home — home to her father and mother, I mean?" said Milly.

"Well, I have known her to do so; but girls soon learn to write proper letters, and then, of course, there is no bother about it," said Miss Gladding.

"You never had yours stopped, I suppose?" said Milly, with something of a covert sneer in her tone. She believed that one half of the school were taught to play the spy upon the other half, and in this belief she was somewhat near the truth, but not entirely. Room mates, limited as their opportunities of intercourse were, were yet made a careful study by the authorities, and those girls selected for new-comers—especially Potestants—who were known to be most earnest and zealous in the practice of all their religious duties. To win over these Protestant girls

was a work of especial merit, that would gain for them the favor of heaven and all the authorities of the convent, and so they were not likely to leave any means untried to effect this—but spies in the way Milly thought them they were not. She was, therefore, a little surprised to hear that even Miss Gladding's letters did not always pass the critical judgment of Sister Ursula, and thought there was small chance of hers getting through.

“What do you write about?” she asked.

“About our lessons, and all that happens here. Just such letters as you would write home, I presume.”

Milly sighed. “I'm afraid mine wont pass.”

“What have you written about?” asked Amy.

“O, about every thing; how Augusta

has deceived every body, and that she is a novice and we never see her, and they only give us stale bread for breakfast, and wont let me make my room pretty—I've told just every thing."

"So I should think," laughed Miss Gladding. "But you can't expect the sisters to pass a letter like that."

"Mine is not much better, I'm afraid," said Amy, ruefully; "what shall we do about it?"

"I know what I shall do—give up my letter sealed, and, if they say any thing, let them have a piece of my mind."

"They have had plenty of that—from other girls, I mean," laughed Miss Gladding.

"And what did they do?" asked Milly.

"Just what you will—grumbled and fussed and sulked for a few weeks, then

gave in and made themselves as comfortable as the rest."

"But I won't give in," said Milly. "I don't think I can ever make myself comfortable without a book—not even a Bible being allowed."

"But there is the school library. How can you say there are no books, Miss Curtis?"

"I never want to see those books again. I never read any thing so awful, so horrible, as that 'Sight of Hell,' that I took up the other day."

"It is very dreadful; but don't you think every body ought to read it as a warning against sin? My confessor directed me to read that book right through as a penance, and I shall never forget some of the things I read there."

"I should think not. I felt almost

afraid to close my eyes for several nights afterward, and I only read a few lines of it."

"Then don't you think that terror was sent as a special warning that you might escape the awful reality, by and by, by embracing your present opportunity of becoming reconciled to God?"

"I hope and believe I am reconciled to God," said Amy in a serious tone.

"You! Miss Curtis, how can you be so presumptuous?" exclaimed Miss Gladding.

"I am not presumptuous; it is not presumption to say I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died to redeem me from sin, and make the way of reconciliation to God plain and easy for all who will accept it."

"But—but you don't believe in the only true Catholic Church; you sneer at the saints."

"No, no, Miss Gladding; I don't sneer

at the saints, because I know some of them were good and holy men and women; but I do not believe in them as mediators. We have one advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and there is no other name given among men whereby they can be saved."

"But the Church says we cannot be saved unless we first become reconciled to her, and submit to her authority," said Florie's friend, doubtfully. "Do you think these good sisters would give up their lives to this work if salvation could be purchased so cheaply as Protestants pretend to believe?"

"We do not *pretend* to believe," said Amy; "we do not believe that salvation can be purchased at all. It is God's free gift to all who seek it. It was bought for us once for all, by the full, perfect,

and sufficient sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have to accept it, and—”

“And go on living just as you please,” interrupted Miss Gladding. “I have heard of this dreadful error before, and nothing can be more dangerous. It is the cause of all the troubles and trials God sends”—and here she glanced at Florie—“for he would fain have all men learn the true obedience, the true devotion that is due to him.”

“What do you think this obedience is?” asked Milly. “We are always hearing about it. Every rule here is founded on this true obedience. I should like to know what it is.”

“Entire submission to the Church, who can alone teach us what the will of God is. These rules are founded on this obedience because they teach us to submit

our will and pleasure in things we cannot understand the reason of as well as those we can, and, beginning with these little things, we learn submission in greater. Is it any pleasure to the good sisters, do you think, to impose the rule of silence so much? They do it for our good, that we may learn to submit in what is often a difficult matter, and then by and by we shall find it easier to yield obedience to other things just as hard to understand, but which the Church may direct us to do."

"Amy, don't you think if we always looked at the rules in this way, as being done to please God, we should find them easier to keep?" whispered Florie.

"Yes, dear, I think we should; but I am not sure whether the obedience that is required of us is true obedience or not."

"Can you really doubt whether you

ought to obey those who are set over you?" asked Miss Gladding, in surprise.

"O what a fuss you make about this obedience!" said Milly; "of course we must obey the rules while we are here—at least where there is no chance of breaking them," she added, glancing at the two sisters who still kept watch over them. "But now let us talk about something else. Tell us about the music, Florie. I've often heard about nuns' singing. Is it really so very beautiful?"

"Beautiful! it is heavenly," said Miss Gladding.

"Yes, that it is," said Florie. "I sat and listened until the tears came into my eyes. O Milly, I wish you could have heard it; it seemed to carry you right up, and make you forget every thing and every body."

"Well, that is worth going to church for," said Milly, musingly.

"I don't think so," said Amy, decidedly. "We go to church to worship God, not to enjoy a concert."

"Did you worship God in the corridor?" asked Miss Gladding, sneeringly.

"I tried to do so," replied Amy.

"O Amy, do come to chapel next Sunday; I'm sure it cannot be wrong, and it is so much better than staying in that horrid corridor."

"I think I shall come just to hear the music; I do like good music, and I've heard so much about nuns' singing that I should like to hear them once," said Milly.

"If you hear our music once you will certainly want to hear it again—all of you," said Miss Gladding.

“Thank you for the warning, I will not come once,” said Amy, decidedly.

“Are you so afraid of it, then? do you think it’s like the fabled music of the sirens that drew the sailors on to the rocks?” laughed Milly.

“Well, yes, it may be something like that to some people; it might be to me, and Florie, too, I think. Promise me, dear, you will not go again,” she added in an earnest whisper.

Florie looked from her sister to her friend. “I cannot, Amy dear,” she faltered; “for I have promised Esther that I will go once more at least. She said I could not judge fairly, going only once.”

At this moment the bell rang, and Miss Gladding took care to lead Florie away before another word could be said. Amy looked after her sister, feeling very sad,

and wondering what she could do, what she ought to do; whether there was any possibility of informing her mother of the mischief that had already begun to work.

CHAPTER VII.

SISTER MAGDALEN.

AMY knew that the letter she had written would be returned to her when Sister Ursula had read all its numerous complaints, and so she resolved to destroy it and write another, a shorter and more guardedly worded epistle, that might pass the scrutiny of the nuns, and yet arouse her mother's anxious fears. Milly, however, decided to seal her letter in pretended ignorance of the rule, and send it as it was.

So the two letters were placed in the box at the school-room door, and Amy waited with some anxiety until the next day, almost fearing each time she saw the nun that she would be told her letter

could not be sent. But the next day passed, and the next, and nothing had been said, and Milly grew quite jubilant over the success of her bold step. "We shall have papa here as fast as he can travel, now," she contrived to whisper to Amy a day or two later.

"How soon can he reach us? before Sunday?" asked Amy.

Milly shook her head. "Monday or Tuesday," she said.

"Then mamma will be here first, I should think. I hope it will be before Sunday," and Amy sighed, for Sunday had grown to be a dread to her, with its weary waiting outside the chapel door.

For the rest of that week Amy gave but a divided attention to her lessons, for each moment she expected to be summoned to the Superior's parlor to meet

her mother. But the days passed on without any break in the usual routine, and Sunday came again; and this time Amy was the only one left waiting in the corridor.

As Milly passed her on her way into the chapel she contrived to whisper, "Come in just to hear the singing."

But Amy shook her head. She could not speak; her heart was too full of sorrowful disappointments to see her sister and cousin, and so many of the other girls whom she knew to be Protestants, going into chapel. She stood against the wall as she had done the Sunday before, trying to lift her heart in prayer to God. If only she might have been alone it would have been an intense relief to be able to kneel down and pour out her trouble to her Father in heaven; but the

lay sister in charge kept strict watch and ward, even objecting to Amy leaning against the wall, saying it was against the rule, which ordered that all standing there by their own choice should stand upright, and not move. To stand upright, without moving, for two hours, was almost a physical impossibility ; but the sister was so vexed at being kept in the corridor by one obstinate girl that she insisted Amy had behaved very badly, and reported her to the Spiritual Mother. This punishment was often threatened, but seldom carried into execution, except in very flagrant cases, so that Amy felt the disgrace the more keenly, undeserved as it was. But whatever her feelings of disgrace might be, the punishment decreed seemed greater than she could bear. The nun declined to see Amy that day, but sent word by

the lay sister that she should not be allowed the usual privilege of talking to her sister and cousin. Whether this was designed to prevent Amy saying any thing against their going to chapel, as she had done before, or whether it was the most fitting punishment that could be thought of, may be an open question; but the authorities certainly took the most effectual means of preventing any check being given to Milly and Florie.

Poor Florie certainly seemed greatly distressed, and Milly indignant, because Amy was not allowed to walk with them; but Milly comforted herself and her cousin by saying they had a lucky escape from a long lecture, and they laughed and chatted and criticised the nuns, and the singing, beautiful as it was, but forgot to say a word about their letters. Milly had al-

most forgotten the matter now. Her father could not reach them until Monday or Tuesday, but he was certain to come then. She had quite made up her mind upon this point, and, beyond saying they should be at home by the next Sunday, Milly said not a word of her expectation.

The long, dreary day came to an end at last, and Amy, feeling almost sick at heart, began to count the hours to Tuesday, thinking she would not expect her uncle until the latest moment, and then if he should come before, the surprise would be all the more pleasant and welcome.

But Monday passed, and Tuesday, and on Wednesday Milly had grown so manifestly restless and uneasy that she was several times reproved for her inattention at lessons. Amy contrived to whisper once as they passed each other, "Any

news from home?" But Milly only shook her head in a disconsolate fashion.

Thursday morning, however, brought a letter to Florie. It was handed to her open, but she had been prepared for this, and so made no complaint. When she had read it, she asked if it might be passed to her sister, as it was from her mamma.

Amy stared in blank amazement when she read the opening words: "Why does not Amy write to me; she cannot, surely, be so busy as not to find time for a word to send her mother?"

Poor Amy was startled out of all remembrance of rules as she read these words, and, rising from her seat with the open letter in her hand and her eyes full of tears, she said to the nun who had charge of the class, "May I go to Sister Ursula?"

"Not now," said the nun, calmly motioning for her to sit down again.

"But—but it is about a letter my mother ought to have had a week ago," said Amy, not able to choke back her rising sobs.

"The business of the school cannot be interrupted for this," said the nun, coldly.

"But my mother—"

"Will you sit down, or do you desire to be reported to the Spiritual Mother again?" asked the teacher, sternly.

Amy sat down, feeling almost bewildered with this fresh trouble; for she could see from the whole tone of the letter that her mother thought her neglectful and unkind, and certainly could not have received her letter, sent at the same time as Florie's.

Recreation time came at last, and again she asked if she might see Sister Ursula about her letter; but she was told that the

Spiritual Mother was the person to refer to, and she could not be seen until the evening. So she had to wait with what patience she could master; but meanwhile she contrived to tell Milly that she feared neither of their letters had been sent, and it was, therefore, useless to expect her father to fetch them this week.

Milly looked dismayed when she heard it. "Not been sent?" she repeated; "but Sister Ursula would have told us if they had not been suitable."

"Well, I am going to ask about mine this evening—we have to see the Spiritual Mother about it."

Milly made a wry face at the very mention of her name. "She is an old cat, I know; but I'll brave her and go with you; they sha'n't destroy my letters without hearing of it."

That afternoon, while Milly was in the music room, Augusta Crane came in to help Sister Magdalen with some of the pupils, and Milly, forgetting all rules regarding their talking to the novices, at once began, "O Augusta, how could you be so wicked and deceitful as to bring us to this place when you knew we should be miserable?"

"Hush, hush, dear child; you are not miserable," said Sister Magdalen; and Augusta, knowing something of Milly's impetuous temper, went and closed the door that no one else might hear what passed. Only Amy was present besides themselves, and so it might be hoped that Milly's outburst of anger would not be heard of by the authorities. She seemed glad to see Milly, too, and, in spite of her angry looks, went and kissed her.

“How can you kiss me, Miss Crane? If you cared for me one bit you would not have brought me to this horrid place, where you knew I should never be allowed to see you.”

“But you may see me, Milly dear, as much as you like—at least by and by.”

“How?” asked Milly.

“By learning the holy devotion that will make you sincerely desire a more strict rule and greater mortification of the flesh.”

“You want me to become a novice?” demanded Milly, with a fresh accession of anger.

“My dear, no one is forced to become a novice or a nun,” interposed Sister Magdalen. “I took the vows because—because I could follow my beloved music, and devote all the talent God had given me to

his service, safe from the snares and temptations of the world."

"Well, I like the snares and temptations of my own home," said Milly, perversely; "and I like to tell the truth in a straightforward fashion, and not deceive people. I don't call that 'holy devotion,'" she added, darting a look at Augusta.

"Milly dear, you don't understand. When I first came here I felt as you do about the rules; but—but something happened after a little while, and then I learned something of the true obedience, and how blessed it was to give up my own pride, and live for God."

"My dear child, if you only knew how greatly God had favored your friend—honoring her even above all the holy sisters of this house, before she began to care for him, you would not wonder that she

has decided to embrace the religious life, that she may gain even more distinguished favors, both for herself and others," said Sister Magdalen.

"I know she deceived mamma about this place," said Milly, sullenly.

"Milly dear, don't use such a hard word as that," said Augusta. "Do you not think that, having tasted the sweetness of devotion and true obedience myself, I should be anxious that my friends should know something of the same blessedness?"

"But why did you not tell your mother all about it? She does not know that you are a novice, and I don't think any obedience can be true and right that teaches girls to deceive their friends like that. How could you do it, Augusta?" she added, reproachfully.

The tears came into Augusta's eyes as

she looked down into Milly's angry face. "Ah, Milly!" she said, with a sigh; "you do not know how hard it was not to tell her every thing—every thing from the very beginning."

"Well, why didn't you, then?" said Milly, in a kinder tone.

"It was laid upon me as a test of my obedience not to do it. I thought if dear mamma could only know how highly God had honored me, and saved her and papa through the prayers of the sisters, she would certainly become religious, too; but the Superior bade me lay down my own judgment in this matter at the feet of God—he would accept the sacrifice, and the merit I should gain would be as great as though all my friends had been saved through me. It would be a test—a needful test of my humility and obedience, to

say nothing of what had happened until I had passed a year of my novitiate; but she said if I could bring some friends back with me, without disclosing my own change of faith, it would be acceptable as a good work performed under great difficulties."

"Then I am sacrificed to add to your store of good works," said Milly.

"My dear child, if you only knew your friend as we know her in the convent you would understand that she has already so large a store of good works laid up in heaven that there was little need to add to them," said Sister Magdalen; "she is already almost a saint," added the nun, with something of a touch of envy in her tone.

"And are you a saint too, Sister Magdalen?" asked Milly.

"Me? O, no! I love my music too

well. There is so little of sacrifice in my life, for some one must teach the music, but it is no trouble, no cross to me, when all try to learn, and so there is no room for saintliness."

"Shall we be cross and obstinate for you?" asked Milly.

"It would grieve me, that would—not for myself, but for you, because you could not learn well if you were cross, and some who are here have great musical talent."

"Have I?" asked Milly.

"Of course you have," answered Augusta, before Sister Magdalen could speak; "and you ought to make the most of your time here, to cultivate your taste and talent. If you will not learn the obedience we are anxious to teach, you ought to profit by the facilities there are for learning to appreciate the best music."

“Well, I certainly will do that,” said Milly; “at least, until papa comes to fetch me home. Do you know I don’t mean to stop here?”

“I have heard something about it,” said Augusta, indifferently. “If you should go back before the year is over I hope you will not say any thing to mamma about me.”

“I wont promise,” said Milly; “you know I have no wish to learn the obedience you are in love with; I like my own way better,” she added.

The music lessons had suffered somewhat by this interruption, and so Sister Magdalen proposed that they should come to her room during recreation hour, and make up for lost time—a proposal that Milly eagerly accepted; and Amy would have done the same at another time, but

she was anxious to make inquiries about her letter, and reminded Milly that they were going to the Spiritual Mother's room.

"O, I must go another time, unless you will ask about my letter. You might do that, Amy ; you know all about it."

Amy readily promised to do this, and so when Milly went for her extra music lesson she made her way to the room where the Spiritual Mother sat to receive the visits of the scholars.

She went along with some trepidation, dreading the encounter, and remembering she had already incurred the disgrace of being reported to this authority, and wondering whether this would influence the matter in hand.

But her fears entirely vanished when she opened the door and saw the little old nun who sat at the table. She had a mer-

ry little face, and eyes that twinkled like a squirrel's, and Amy caught herself wondering how she had ever become a nun, while she was timidly asking about her letter. The little nun actually laughed when Amy told her that her mother was hurt and anxious at not receiving a letter from her as well as from Florie.

“Very unreasonable of your mother, my dear ; but mothers are like hens, you know, and keep up a constant clucking if one of their brood gets away for half an hour.”

The simile was so apt as regarded her own mamma, and coming so unexpectedly, Amy laughed too ; but she said the next minute, “I do not want to make mamma anxious, and so will you please tell me about my letter.”

“And what do you want to know about

it, my child? It is quite safe, if that is what you mean."

"You did not destroy it, then?" said Amy, thinking it had been sent after all—that there was merely some delay in dispatching it.

"Destroy it? O dear, no! we never destroy such important documents as young ladies' letters. Here it is," she added, holding up the letter, which she had just taken out of a pigeon-hole at the side.

"Then—then was it not suitable?" faltered Amy, as she saw the letter consigned to the pigeon-hole again.

"Not quite, my dear. You must try again. I am very careful of mothers' feelings, you see," she added, with another laugh.

"And—and may I bring the letter to

you when it is ready?" asked Amy, thinking this little old woman would not be so hard in her judgment as stern Sister Ursula.

But the nun shook her head. "You have learned by this time, my child, that every thing in this house is regulated by its rules. I am under them as much as you are, and so we must both conform. Give Sister Ursula the letter to-morrow," she added, waving her hand by way of dismissal; and Amy went out from the presence of the Spiritual Mother, half laughing in spite of her disappointment.

CHAPTER VIII.

DRIFTING.

HOW many letters Amy wrote it would be hard to say. One said too much, another too little, and when at last one was written that was deemed suitable by the authorities, Amy knew that it said nothing of what was troubling her so much. Another week had passed, and Florie seemed more than ever taken up with her new friends, and Milly was so eager to excel in music that they both seemed to have forgotten every thing else; and Amy began to despair of ever being able to let her friends know the true state of affairs.

The weather had begun to grow cold by

this time, especially in the morning and evening; and to stand in the stone corridor outside the chapel door, while the rest were at prayers, made the girls shiver and long for a run up and down to warm their feet. As yet, however, neither Florie nor Milly had gone into chapel except on Sunday; but one afternoon, when they were walking together, Milly said, rather suddenly, "I don't mean to stand shivering in the cold any more, Amy; if we go to hear mass on Sunday we may as well go to prayers all the week, and I shall go to-morrow; it's a good deal warmer in the chapel than it is outside."

"I wish you would come, too, dear," Florie ventured to say. "It made me feel miserable this morning when I thought of you standing outside in the cold all the time—more than two hours."

"Yes, Amy, you might as well give in, like the rest do. Nobody holds out like you, I can see, and I know it's that makes the mistress-general so cross with you always," said Milly.

"I can't help it," said Amy, wearily.

"Yes, you can. Why not come in and listen to the music, and take things easy? You know, when we come to Rome we must do as they do at Rome," added Milly, with a short laugh.

But Amy shook her head. "I could not; it is idolatry—all the service of the mass," she said.

"That is because you do not understand it," eagerly put in Florie. "Somehow it seems as if I like it better—at least, I might, perhaps, if I had been a Catholic," she added the next minute, seeing Amy's alarmed look.

“Well, the singing is so lovely I don’t think I shall care to go to our own Church again. Fancy one old man singing through his nose, and another out of time, and the music—all very well in its way, if one had heard nothing else; but after what we get here it is enough to make you put your fingers in your ears and run away from it.”

“Then would you go to a Roman Catholic church from choice, Milly?” asked Amy.

“O, don’t ask me, my dear; and pray don’t look so shocked,” said Milly, lightly.

“I wish you could understand us better, Amy,” said Florie, with a sigh; “If you would only come to church with us I am sure you would not be so uncharitable as you are.”

“I am not uncharitable,” said Amy; “but

I cannot help feeling sorry that you are so ready to fall into the errors they teach here."

"Don't alarm yourself, Amy, we sha'n't do that; but who could resist their lovely music? Just come and hear the nuns sing once, and you will confess it is heavenly," said Milly.

"You need not be afraid for me," put in Florie, "for I don't go to chapel to worship the saints. Esther says I can do as I like about that. Of course every body *must* reverence the blessed Virgin, and they don't do much more, so that, after all, there is not so much difference between Protestants and Roman Catholics."

"Who said there was?" asked Miss Gladding, who joined them at this moment. She rarely left the sisters to themselves for five minutes, and this afternoon

Amy felt rather vexed at the interruption, and, answering her rather shortly, begged she would leave them.

But Florie looked as annoyed as her friend at this. "How cross you are, Amy!" she said. "I can't think what is coming to you, to be so unkind to me," and the tears rose to her eyes instantly.

"Dear Florie, I want you all to myself for a little while," said Amy, throwing her arms round her sister's neck.

"To scold and worry and find fault with her, I suppose," said Miss Gladding. "I go, of course, if Florie wishes it, but I won't go unless she tells me herself."

Amy looked at her sister, but Florie had turned toward her friend. "O Esther, you know I cannot spare you," she said; "no one can understand me but you. Amy dear, don't be offended; you know

how dearly I love you, but somehow you can't understand me as Esther does; you don't know what I feel about poor papa, and how I long to devote my life to God, that no more trouble may come to us."

"Florie dear, are you forgetting that God is our Father, who does not afflict us but for our good?" said Amy, quickly.

"And that we may learn the way of true obedience and devotion. I think your sister understands this quite as well as you do, Miss Curtis, and can see the gracious wisdom of God in removing her papa, that she might come here and learn of this holy community the true way of salvation," rejoined Miss Gladding.

"O, Amy! if you could only understand what I feel about this," said Florie, with a sigh.

"My darling, I do. Why will you not

trust me, as you always did until we came here ? ”

“ I do trust you, Amy. What unkind things you say ! I'm sure I almost dread Sunday afternoon coming,” and Florie took refuge in tears.

“ What is the matter ? ” asked the lay sister, suddenly coming upon them, and glancing suspiciously at Amy, who was already looked upon as hopelessly obstinate herself, and likely to retard the progress of her sister and cousin.

But Milly had learned one of the lessons of this system of education only too well, and instantly came to the rescue. “ They are only having a few words about the color of a dress,” she said lightly ; and then, to divert the attention of the sister from her cousins, she said, “ When do you think you can teach me that new stitch in em-

broidery, sister? Our class are going to embroider some cushions for the altar, and I want to help."

They had walked on while they were talking, but the lay sister glanced back several times, as though she only half believed Milly's account of her cousin's tears.

In a few minutes Milly joined them again, and Amy instantly exclaimed, "O Milly! how could you do such a thing?"

"My dear, they all do it. Haven't you found that out yet? Why, how ever could any body live here without telling fibs? Why, they teach you themselves it's part of the true obedience! Lying, like music, is taught to perfection here."

"Miss Curtis! how can you say such things!" exclaimed Esther Gladding indignantly.

Milly bowed with mock humility. "I beg your pardon; lying *is* a vulgar word, and so shocking to one's sense of propriety; but here it is brought to the perfection of a fine art, and called true obedience," she said mockingly

"Milly! how dare you?" said Florie, drying her tears in her anger.

"No heroics now, Florie, I beseech you; and pray let us drop this discussion. I'm sure our Sunday afternoons are getting to be quite miserable, when they ought to be jolly—the only day in the week we can talk to each other."

"But I cannot drop this without contradicting you about our Church teaching people to tell falsehoods," said Miss Gladding, with dignity.

"Well, we'll leave the excellent plan she has of believing us all so bad that we can-

not be trusted with the use of our tongues," said Milly; "and just see what she actually says! Sister Catherine has been reading to us again the 'Constitutions and Exercises' of the order of Jesuits, to which this convent belongs."

"Does this belong to the Jesuits?" interrupted Amy.

"Of course it does, my dear. Almost all the convent schools in America belong to that order, and—"

"They are the most learned and devoted of all orders," said Miss Gladding, interrupting Milly again.

"Yes, so devoted that they are actually bound to believe and teach that black is white if the Church orders it—of course it means that things may and ought to be represented just opposite to what they are, if the Church thinks it will serve her pur-

pose to have them so taught. We must not trust even the evidence of our own senses, against the teaching of the Church."

"And you say that Sister Catharine read this?" asked Miss Gladding.

"Yes, of course she did, one supper-time, in the refectory."

"Well, it just shows how you Protestants misunderstand every thing about us. I am sure no one read any thing like what you say."

A few days afterward, however, it was proved that Milly spoke truthfully in this instance, for Amy was paying attention to what was being read, and heard, most distinctly, the following sentence, which is taken from "The Exercises," the authorized exposition of the moral principles of the order of Jesuits:

"In order that we may altogether be of

the same mind, and in conformity with the Church herself, if she shall have defined any thing to be black, which to our eyes appears to be white, we ought, in the same way, to pronounce it to be black. That we may in all things attain to the truth, that we may not err in any thing, we ought ever to hold it as a fixed principle that what I see to be white I shall believe it to be black if the hierarchical Church define it to be so."

"Now, then, who was right about the use of our eyes?" whispered Milly, during the recreation time that followed supper.

"It applies to our conscience as well as to our eyes," said Amy.

"Of course; and Augusta Crane has learned it to perfection. I don't believe—" But Milly's speech was summarily brought to conclusion by the lay sister on guard,

and Amy was severely reprimanded for speaking to one in another class.

Poor Amy! If it had not been that she took a real delight in her lessons, her life at this time would have been very miserable; for, in spite of the rules that regulated every thing in the house, there were a thousand ways by which the sisters could let her know that she was an object of suspicion and dislike; but the one that Amy felt most keenly was the curtailment of her music lessons.

At first Sister Magdalen was too much occupied with other pupils to give that undivided attention to Amy that she did at first, and that her position in the school demanded; then she was allowed to practice alone, or under one of the novices, and at last, when it came to her turn to practice, the pianos were all said to be occu-

pied, and she was ordered to do something else, or, if she did by chance get an opportunity of practicing, it was so broken in upon, and she was asked to exchange instruments with another girl so often, that she knew she was making no progress in what she had intended should be her chief object of study.

Once she ventured to appeal to Sister Magdalen about this, and said, with tears in her eyes, "I am so anxious to fit myself for a teacher of music, that I may help my mother by and by, for papa's death has left us very poor."

"My child, there are others quite as anxious as you to do the same thing, for many of our pupils are poor; but while they will use their talent to win their daily bread, they will also devote it to the service of God and his holy Church; but

you—you do not believe in a God at all, I hear,” said the nun, with a look of aversion that ill became her sweet, calm face.

“Sister Magdalen, who could have told you such a dreadful thing as that?” said Amy, in a tone of distress.

“It needs no telling, for all in the house know it now. I pity you from my heart, for this time of grace and opportunity will never be given to you again, and I shudder to think what your fate will be by and by. I wish you would read a book there is in the library,” suddenly added the nun.

“What book is it?” asked Amy.

“‘The Sight of Hell’—a most pious book, but full of warning to such as you.”

“I have seen it,” said Amy.

“And was not that sufficient to rouse you out of your unbelief?”

“Sister Magdalen, I do believe. I believe that God is my Father, that Jesus died to redeem me, and that it is dishonoring him to pray to saints, or angels, or the Virgin.”

“But, my child, I thought—” But what Sister Magdalen thought Amy did not hear, for the Mistress-General came into the room at that moment, and ordered Amy to leave it. But there had been a change in Sister Magdalen’s face, she could see, while she was speaking—a look of wondering surprise and pity—and Amy hoped she might yet be able to obtain the benefit of her instruction again.

In this, however, she was disappointed. She saw Sister Magdalen more seldom than ever from this time, and she knew that she must give up all hope of improvement in music while she was in the

convent school. This was the more bitter because she saw girls with less ability and less incentive to learn than she had making rapid progress. Milly was one of these. She was now quite a showy performer, going through a difficult and brilliant piece of music with ease; and Florie was no less skillful, although the music chosen for her was of a different character, more quiet and solid, and she was often told she would be able to play an organ by and by. All these things were hard to bear, and Amy fretted and worried herself over them—the more so, perhaps, because there was no one to whom she could unburden herself, either by word or by letter.

They were urged to write to their friends frequently, and they did so, but the letters told nothing of their real life, although they

entered into details of the progress made in various branches of study.

Once Amy ventured to tell her mother that she was making no progress in music, as she had so few opportunities of practice ; but the letter lay for a week in the Spiritual Mother's charge, and was then returned to her.

All the letters that came for them, too, were opened before they received them, and Amy had a keen suspicion that they did not receive all that was sent, for her mother several times asked why questions had not been answered, that Amy had never heard of before. All her mother's letters were very short, too, and came at uncertain intervals, and were not at all the sort of letters she expected to receive from her mother, who was an earnest Christian woman, and yet seemed suddenly to have

forgotten her children's spiritual interests, and concerned herself only about their material wants and progress.

All this was a mystery that Amy could not penetrate ; but she lay and thought of it in bed, while Sister Ursula was repeating her long string of prayers aloud—prayers she could not join in, but which she had heard so repeatedly that she knew some of them by heart almost, against her will. One, from the “Rosary of the Blessed Virgin,” which Sister Ursula often used, was firmly imprinted on her memory.

“Hail ! holy Queen Mother of Mercy, our Life, our Sweetness, and our Hope. To thee do we cry, poor banished daughters of Eve—to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears ; turn thou, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and

after this, our exile, show to us thy Son Jesus. O most clement, most pious, and most sweet Virgin Mary! Pray for us, O holy mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ."

Nearly all the prayers were of this order. Mary was the advocate to pray her Son to have mercy upon sinners, and the Lord Jesus was represented as turning a deaf ear to their cry, unless urged to have mercy upon them by the continual intercession of his mother. She was the fountain of mercy, and had to wring it from her hard, stern Son, who was so unwilling to save any who presumed to come to him, that he pushed them away, and it was only by the importunities of his mother that he condescended to save any.

This was the unspoken but actual belief growing out of such prayers as they

were continually obliged to hear, and it was being gradually adopted by many a young opening mind who yet went by the name of "Protestant," and only joined in the actual worship for the sake of the music, or to avoid standing two hours in the cold outside the chapel door.

CHAPTER IX.

FLORIE'S AMBITION.

AS Christmas drew near, it was rumored that the school-girls were to represent the sacred drama of Bethlehem, not only before the nuns, but the people of the village were to be invited to witness the spectacle; and every girl was instantly in a fever of excitement as to the part she was to play in the performance.

Of course, there were numerous conjectures as to who should be the Blessed Virgin, and nurse the lovely doll that the nuns were dressing for the occasion; and the sisters seemed to take almost as much interest in the affair as the girls themselves. It seemed to be a moot point, even with

them, as to who should be chosen for this post of honor; but one must be selected soon, for the dresses would have to be bought and prepared, and in view of this every girl was looking over her small stock of pocket money, or writing home for more.

One day Florie came to ask her sister if she could lend her some, as she had spent nearly all her own a week or two before. Once a month one of the sisters held a sale of such things as the girls required or were allowed to possess—crosses, reliquaries, and crucifixes carved in ivory forming a large proportion of their stock in trade—and Florie had expended nearly all she had possessed, and was, therefore, somewhat disconcerted by a whisper she heard, that she was likely to be chosen for the post of honor.

“Several of the girls say I am to be the

Blessed Virgin, and I shall want a white cashmere dress, and I have not nearly money enough, Amy."

"Neither have I," said Amy, dryly; "and I am sure we cannot afford to buy such expensive white dresses, either."

"O Amy, what shall I do? How much money have you got? You have spent hardly any thing since you have been here, I know."

"No, I have no wish to wear the outward badges of a religion I do not believe in," replied Amy, glancing at the cross Florie had lately purchased.

"Amy, you are unkind. I wish you would not speak like that," said Florie, almost in tears.

"I don't mean to be unkind, darling; but—but O, Florie, it makes me unhappy to see you drifting on from one thing to

another. Milly says you stop and bow to the statue of the Virgin in the dormitory every time you pass it now."

"What business have you to listen to Milly and her tales about me? You know she will say any thing that suits her own purpose, and she has just told you that to spite me."

"Nonsense, dear. But tell me, Florie, that it is not true—that you have not bowed the knee to this Baal!"

"Amy, how can you say such things—about the mother of our Lord, too?"

"Well, dear, perhaps it was wrong, for Mary was a good and pious woman, and is grieved, I am sure, if she knows any thing about it, to see a statue of herself worshiped in the place of her divine Son. But tell me, dear, that you have not done this," said Amy earnestly.

But Florie chose to ignore the question. "Milly must be a mean, spiteful thing, to come and tell such tales as that," she said. "It's only because she wants to be the Virgin herself, and Sister Magdalen told her yesterday a more active position would suit her better, and she is teaching her a lovely hymn to sing to me."

"But, Florie, it is not settled that you are to be any thing yet, and you really cannot afford to buy expensive dresses, and so it will be better to decline at once. It seems strange that they should choose a Protestant girl for this part."

"Protestant girls are to take the parts of other saints. Kate Ward is to be Saint Elizabeth, and Maria Dew Saint Cecilia, and little Mary Hope Saint Catharine, and every body says I shall make a lovely Virgin if I am properly dressed."

"I wish you would give it up, dear, I—I cannot give you every farthing I possess," said Amy, for she had formed a plan in her own mind, to carry out which she would require all the money she had.

Florie burst into tears. "I did not think you would be so unkind, Amy," she said. "But perhaps you think you may want it to buy a dress for yourself," she suddenly added.

"O no, there will be no room for me," said Amy, with a faint smile.

"Yes, there will; because there are to be shepherds and wise men; the richest girls are to take these parts, because of the offerings they will have to pour into my lap."

"They are to be returned to them again, I thought," said Amy.

"No, they are to be offerings toward

buying a new image of the Virgin for the chapel, for the old one is getting very shabby. But, Amy, what am I to do about my dress?" asked Florie, returning to the matter under discussion.

"I don't know, I am sure," said her sister.

"Amy, you might lend me what money you have got; it is real mean of you."

"I cannot help it. If I did not want it for a particular purpose, I am not sure that I could lend it you for this; but I do want it, every farthing of it, and so I hope—"

"Then I shall write to mamma, and ask her to send me some," interrupted Florie.

"O, don't do that! At least, if you write tell her exactly what you want it for," said Amy.

"I shall tell her I *must* have a new

dress. She will not be so unkind as to refuse me, I know."

"It is you who are unkind to ask it, when you know she has so little money to spare. We should not be here now if it were not for that," and Amy heaved a deep sigh as she spoke.

"Well, I don't see why you need groan and grumble so much about being here; I'm sure every body is very kind."

Amy made no reply to this. She knew that Florie was treated kindly by every body; but there was a marked difference in this respect in the treatment of herself, and she could not help feeling it very keenly sometimes, though she was thankful Florie did not share in it.

Soon after Florie had left her Milly came to inquire if she had heard from home lately.

Amy shook her head. "I am expecting a letter from mamma every day," she said.

"Well, I have just had one from my mamma—such a strange letter, almost as strange as that one I had soon after I came, when she told me Annette had got there, and she was glad to hear I was so happy, but sorry I had cut my finger and could not write. It was just when I would not write on purpose to alarm them at home—don't you remember?—and they sent another girl with Annette to be mamma's maid, as Annette was to go to Mrs. Crane's. Amy, I believe those maids are just spies, and told to crack up the convent school, for—would you believe it?—three more girls are coming after Christmas from our town, just because I am so happy and so charmed, and getting on so well with my studies."

“Well, you have seemed happy enough lately, Milly.”

“What’s the good of making one’s self miserable? When we come to Rome—you know the rest; but I am not so charmed with the place that I want any body else to put her head into the trap. I say, that little goose, Florie, is going to Rome fast. Fancy her being chosen for the Virgin—not but that I think she will make a lovely one, better than any body else here.”

“Milly, did you really see her bow to that image, or were you joking?” asked Amy anxiously.

“Well, to be sure! so my word is to be doubted now! what next, I wonder?”

“Well, you know—” and there Amy hesitated.

“Don’t be afraid of saying it; nobody

can help being a liar here unless they go in for martyrdom, as you do. But I wouldn't do it to you, Amy, and especially about that," said Milly in a more serious tone; "I told you because I thought you might say a word to her before things have gone too far."

"I am afraid they have gone too far already," said Amy in a choking voice. "I wish you had never gone into chapel, Milly," she added.

Her cousin shrugged her shoulders. "I could not stay outside, and you wont be able to do it much longer."

"I don't think I can. I was so cold last Sunday I felt sick and sleepy."

"What do you mean to do, then?"

"Don't ask me, Milly."

"Well, I think you would better give in. The sisters are saying they never

had such an obstinate girl in the school before."

"Well, I can hardly wonder at girls giving in, for it is hard enough to stick to one's principles here," said Amy with a sigh.

"I told you at first it was best to take things easy, and not set yourself against them. I say, what part are you going to take in this religious play-acting? I am to be a wise man from the East, and pour a bag full of money into Florie's lap. I shall take care they are cents, nothing more, for it's just a trick to get a new wax image for the chapel."

"Florie is in trouble about her dress. I don't see how she is to buy a new one, such as she wants," said Amy.

"O, that's the best of the fun! Two of the sisters and two of the girls are going

to the city to buy the finery. I am to have a long robe of crimson silk damask, and another girl blue, and another gold color."

"O, Milly! if you went to the city you might slip a letter into the post without its being seen."

"So I might," said Milly, but, once set talking about dress, letters were of small importance in her eyes. But it was arranged between the cousins that Amy should write a long letter to her mother, detailing all the treatment they were subjected to, and Milly was to do the same, and, if possible, prevent the new scholars from coming. It was not very easy to do this on so short a notice, for the party were going to the city the next day; but, by dint of writing during recreation time, and penciling a few words at the time

under cover of a lesson book, Amy contrived to write such a letter as would be sure to alarm her mother, and, with trembling hope, she intrusted this to Milly, never doubting but she would intently watch for the first opportunity to post it, as she was one of the girls going.

Florie was not to be of the party, but she had written to her mother asking for a ten dollar bill, and in the meantime had borrowed this amount from one of the girls, to purchase the material for her dress—for it had been finally settled now that she should personate the blessed Virgin.

The regular routine of the school was broken up a good deal now, for there was music and singing practice going on all day long, and every body's head seemed turned, for the time being.

The return of the shopping party was looked forward to with eagerness by all, but none felt so anxious as Amy about it; and when at last it was announced that they had come back, and those who had commissioned them to make purchases were to go to the school room and see them, Amy rose with the rest, determined to get in and see Milly if she could.

But just as she was about to enter, a lay sister touched her on the shoulder and told her she was wanted in the Spiritual Mother's room. Amy looked up in surprise, but never glanced at the possibility of being called to account for this last letter, which she felt sure Milly would take care of.

But the moment she opened the door she saw it lying on the table before her, all the various scraps of paper upon

which it was written being laid out separately.

“You know why I have sent for you,” said the little nun, severely. “You have most shamefully abused the kindness and tender love with which you have been nurtured here, and sought to bring this holy sisterhood into disrepute by telling most gross and wicked falsehoods concerning them. I know not yet what may be deemed a suitable punishment for one so ungrateful ; but, for the present, you cannot be allowed to mix with your companions, or speak to your sister, to turn her pure mind from its search after truth. Sit down there for the present,” said the nun, pointing to a chair in the corner, and she went out, locking the door behind her.

Amy had barely time to collect her

thoughts, and wonder what her punishment would be, when the sound of voices, in what seemed to be the next room, attracted her attention. The partition must have been very slight, for she could soon distinguish Augusta Crane's voice, but her companion seemed to be a man, and Amy could distinctly hear him say, "It is most desirable that your brother should join our holy society." She could not hear Augusta's reply, but the next minute the man spoke again.

"We have received advices assuring us that he is very dissatisfied with the way of life his father has planned for him, and hints have been dropped that if he came here he might follow his beloved art of painting—even be sent to Rome to pursue his studies; but it needs a word from you, my daughter, to make him decide."

Another pause, and then the Jesuit spoke again. "I cannot understand your unwillingness to do this, after the distinguished favor you have received. To you it was communicated, by the voice of an angel, that your parents were in danger; and the whole community were moved at once to offer prayer on their behalf. On your writing to ask whether they had experienced the rough weather predicted, you were told that a fearful storm assailed them at midnight, and it was feared the vessel would be wrecked. Had it been so, your father, mother, and brother would have been drowned; but they were saved by the prayers of this community, and the Church claims some reward from you."

"Is it not enough that I have devoted myself to the service of the Church?"

asked Augusta, evidently speaking in a sharp tone.

"You are willing so to devote yourself, my daughter, but we know not yet that the Church will accept the mode of life which you have chosen. It may be that you can do her better service by living in the world, and working for her secretly, always obeying the commands of those set over you."

"No, no ! I cannot do that again," said Augusta.

"Then you have not learned the true obedience the Church has been striving to teach you ever since you first came here. As your confessor, I lay it upon your conscience to tell me who has been disturbing you in our most holy faith."

"No one," Amy heard Augusta whisper, and there were a few more words uttered,

but she could not distinguish these, or the priest's reply.

Presently, however, she said, "My brother would never become a monk, I know."

"My daughter, we have no desire that he should. He may be a Jesuit, and yet live in the world as an American gentleman of cultivated taste and a patron of the fine arts. But, once pledged to our order, he would use his wealth and influence to forward the interests of holy Church by all the means in his power. You know not how sorely it lies upon the heart of the Holy Father to bring this great nation into the fold of the one Church Catholic; and it is only by educating the young in our schools, and winning such distinguished converts as your brother, who could put vast power into our

hands by and by, that we can hope to do it. We, therefore, lay it upon you as a command, to write to your brother without delay, and urge him to request his father to send him to our seminary for the finishing of his education ; and fear not but we will give him the benefit of a sojourn in Rome for the completion of his art studies. You will write without delay, my daughter," said the priest, and then Amy heard the door close, and a stifled sob followed.

She had had a glimpse of some of the secret springs that moved and guided so many who had no visible connection with this Jesuit seminary—springs that penetrate American society to-day to an extent that would thrill the nation with horror and alarm if they could only be laid bare ; but they are working none the less deadly

harm in secret—undermining the buttresses of truth and uprightness in the character of the young committed to their care, and drawing many into the idolatrous and apostate Church of Rome.

CHAPTER X.

A GLIMPSE BEHIND THE SCENES.

AMY was left some hours to ponder over what she had heard, and what her own punishment would probably be. She would certainly be deprived of all participation in the forthcoming festivities, for the drama was to be followed by a feast and a general relaxation of the rules touching silence and separation of the classes during recreation time.

It seemed that the authorities were in some doubt as to what the character of her punishment ought to be, for, after sitting several hours in darkness, the Spiritual Mother at last came to release her, saying that for the present she was to hold

no conversation with either her sister or her cousin.

She found that this rule was to be strictly enforced on all occasions, and during the whole Christmas holidays, but beyond this she did not hear of any further punishment. The sisters, doubtless, judged this would be as severe a chastisement to Amy as they could well inflict; and, in truth, no more severe one could be found just now. By dint of watching Florie closely she saw for herself that her sister bowed as reverently and paused as long before the statue of the Virgin in the corridor as the most devout Catholic girl in the school, and a whisper also reached her that she was going to confession before partaking of the sacrament of the Romish mass on Christmas-day.

To hear this and not be allowed to

to speak a word of caution or warning was almost agony to poor Amy, and no keener suffering could be devised than this that the sisters were thus able to inflict, while all the time they were reminding her of the great clemency and tenderness with which she was treated.

Every body but Amy was as busy as possible just now, preparing for the forthcoming *fête*, and the bustle and excitement grew every day in its intensity, and numerous little rivalries sprang up among the girls as to the parts they were to take—rivalries by no means healthy in their development, for envy and jealousy of each other on one side, and overbearing triumph on the other, seemed to be the outcome of it all, except in the case of a few careless, good-natured girls, like Milly, who laughed and joked about the most sacred

things, and seemed to lose all reverence for religion and truth together.

At last the day came, and when every thing in the nuns' refectory had been prepared, Amy was admitted, with the general visitors from outside, to see the show.

"How beautiful! How lovely! What a sweet face she has!" greeted her ears on every side as the curtain slowly rose and revealed the impromptu stable, with Florie sitting by the side of the manger, nursing the doll there had been so much bickering over. Amy could not but admit that the whole was very pretty, and Florie certainly made a lovely Virgin. Her sweet, pensive face and downcast look at the waxen baby in her lap were all that they should be. Presently music was heard in the distance, and then a train

of shepherds appeared, singing as they came:

“Hail, Queen of heaven, the ocean star,
Guide of the wanderer here below!
Thrown on life's surge, we claim thy care;
Save us from peril and from woe.
Mother of Christ—Star of the sea—
Pray for the wanderer; pray for me.

“O pious, chaste, and spotless Maid,
We sinners make our prayers through thee;
Remind thy Son that he has paid
The price of our iniquity;
Virgin most pure—Star of the sea—
Pray for the sinner; pray for me.

“Sojourners in this vale of tears,
To thee, blest Advocate, we cry;
Pity our sorrows, calm our fears,
And soothe with hope our misery.
Refuge in grief—Star of the sea—
Pray for the mourner; pray for me.

“And while to Him who reigns above,
In Godhead one, in persons three,
The Source of life, of grace, of love,
Homage we pay on bended knee,
Do thou, bright Queen—Star of the sea,
Pray for thy children; pray for me.”

Amy heard afterward that this hymn had been chosen as a fitting reminder to Augusta of the debt she owed the Virgin as "Star of the sea," for delivering her parents from the perils of shipwreck. When this and several other hymns had been sung in honor of the Virgin, another train appeared, gorgeous in dress, and bearing costly gifts, which they laid at the feet of the Virgin, and which she received with the condescending air of an empress. Her usually sweet, gentle face wore a look of triumph more than once, as a girl who had loudly declared she would not bow her knees dropped humbly before her, depositing her gifts at her feet, but, rising, cast a glance of angry contempt at her; for many a Catholic girl felt her place had been usurped by this Protestant newcomer. Music and singing and the pres-

entation of gifts, in which last performance all the audience were invited to participate, and which many of them responded to with a liberality that astonished Amy, at last came to an end. The play was over, and the actors retired to put away their dresses; but they did not put away the feelings of envy and jealousy that burned the more fiercely for being repressed and kept out of the sight and knowledge of the authorities as much as possible.

As one who had taken no part in the affair, and, therefore, could afford to be quite neutral, Amy heard a good many complaints on both sides. Some complained to her of Florie, that she was playing the hypocrite that she might gain the favor of the nuns; while others said that Milly had been elevated to a position

she ought not to occupy, for she cared nothing for the mysteries of their holy religion, and laughed at every thing sacred whenever she had the opportunity.

Amy felt almost desperate sometimes, seeing and hearing what she did, and yet knowing she was powerless to prevent it, even to speak a word to check either her sister or cousin in the divergent paths this Romish system had driven each of them into. At last she took comfort in the thought that when the new scholars arrived some friend would be with them, and Amy resolved to brave all the consequences of such a bold step, and appeal to them—privately if she had the opportunity, but publicly if no other chance presented itself. Sometimes she had thought of writing a letter and throwing it over the wall of the convent garden

when they went to walk there, as they did sometimes. But, after talking to Miss Carey about the inhabitants of the village, that she might discover, if possible, whether any one was likely to befriend her by posting the letter, she heard, to her dismay, that the village and some miles beyond were owned by this Jesuit community, and the people living close at hand were either devoted to their service, or such stanch Roman Catholics that any letter so found would at once be taken to the convent authorities.

Hearing this made Amy almost despair of any help reaching them, for although she had a half-formed plan of escape in her mind, the fact of every body outside being in league with the convent authorities greatly lessened her chances of success, and so she began to cling to this last hope

of seeing these strangers, as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

Whether she would have carried out her project or not, or whether her courage would have failed at the last moment, is uncertain, but the nuns certainly judged that such a malcontent as Amy was better kept out of the way while these visitors were about, and so, before it was known among the girls that the newcomers had arrived, Amy was sent for to the Spiritual Mother's room, and, without a word of explanation, the door was locked, and she was left to wonder what this extraordinary step might mean. She understood it only too well when she was allowed to return to the school-room an hour or two later, for Milly was chatting away with these strange girls, and Amy knew that the chance upon which she had

rested so many hopes had gone by forever.

The newcomers were all about Milly's age, and former school-fellows with her and Augusta; and it was the account given by Augusta, and the favorable reports contained in Milly's letters since, that had induced their parents to send them.

Milly laughed a little bitterly when she heard this. "We have to write to order here, you know," she said.

"Write to order?" repeated one of her friends.

"Yes, you'll find out what that is; every thing is done by rule here, and if any body dares to rebel—" Milly shrugged her shoulders suggestively.

"Are they very cruel to you?" asked one of the girls.

"Well, I should call it cruel; but there

isn't a single thing you really can lay hold of as a complaint. They don't beat you, nor starve you, nor—but there, just you fall into their ways and take things easy, and times aint so bad here after all."

"And you really do learn well?" asked one.

"O yes, if you only like to try. Music they teach splendidly—if, as I tell you, you don't offend them."

"O, very well, we'll try not to do that," laughed one. But they found it just as hard to conform to the rules at first as Milly had, and wondered how it could be that high-spirited, careless, easy-going Milly Curtis could be broken into such harness. But they were just as much astonished at the change that had already begun to make itself evident in her character. Before she had been known as a re-

markably outspoken, truthful girl—too outspoken for some of her friends sometimes—but this facile way of talking had degenerated into deception now, for if a lay sister came near when they were talking about a prohibited subject, she could in a moment say something quite different from that under discussion, and then appeal to the sister for a confirmation of what she was saying, or ask some question about it in a way that quite bewildered those unaccustomed to this double dealing.

Milly heartily enjoyed the mystification of her newly arrived friends over this recent accomplishment, and when one of them ventured to speak seriously about the sacrifice of truth it involved, she justified herself at once, exclaiming, “My dear, you will do the same thing in three months. We are all adepts at it ;

in fact, we could not live at all without doing it."

"O Milly! I cannot think all these girls are so untruthful—deceitful I call it."

"Well, there's one girl, my cousin Amy, who wont conform to the ways here, as the rest of us do; but pray don't follow her example, for it makes my heart ache to see her. I couldn't endure the burden of two martyrs on my heart."

Of course, hearing that Amy was a cousin, they at once wanted to be introduced; but the nuns had resolved that this should not be. For Amy to receive open sympathy from these in her obstinate ways, would be to confirm her in them, and strengthen the resistance that these were sure to make at first to the rules and regulations of the place. So the lay sis-

ter on guard at once told them that Amy was in disgrace, when they were about to speak to her; but Florie was allowed to come and chat with them, and her cousin, too.

"What is the matter with Amy? Sister Ann says she is in disgrace," whispered Florie.

"Well, you don't believe it, do you? Why, Florie, you must be a goose if you believe every excuse the sisters make about different things. Poor, dear Amy! She is the best girl in the school; she keeps their hateful rules most conscientiously, and wouldn't tell a fib for any thing, and yet they make her miserable."

"She makes herself miserable," said Florie, "and is envious, I believe, because we are not."

"That is one of Esther Gladding's tales.

Florie, if you were not the greatest goose that ever existed without feathers, you never would prefer that mean, cringing, artful girl to your sister Amy."

"Milly, how can you say such things about Miss Gladding!" exclaimed Florie loftily.

"Because I know they are true. The Raven comes the same game with me sometimes, but it wont do. I can see through all their mean little tricks, and don't mean to be taken in by any of them."

"For shame, Milly! it is because you are so very untruthful yourself that you think others are deceitful too," and Florie walked back to her dear friend and roommate, who had gained such an ascendancy over her mind.

There would have to be another division

among the girls now, to provide the three new-comers with suitable room-mates, and Amy half hoped that she might be sent to Florie's room, or Florie to hers. She even ventured to speak to the Spiritual Mother and Sister Ursula about this, but she was told that the exchanges had already been arranged, and she found that Milly's companion, Miss Raven, had been directed to make herself agreeable to one, while two other Catholic girls went with the others.

Of course there was the same dissatisfaction and incipient rebellion at first, the same grumbling complaint made about the unreasonable rule of silence and the being separated from companions and friends; and for a few days and the first Sunday Amy had company in the corridor outside the chapel, and she began to hope that

these new-comers would remain firm in their loyalty to their convictions of what was true in religion, for they loudly declared that they did not believe in prayers to the Virgin and saints, or in mass and confession.

But, alas for their consistency ! Two hours standing broke down their courage, and Milly's account of the music and singing when they were allowed to meet in the afternoon scattered all their objections, and the following Sunday saw Amy again alone in the corridor.

Poor Amy ! heart and courage were well-nigh failing her, for it seemed that God would never answer her prayers. She had formed the habit now, lacking all other opportunity, of engaging in silent prayer, walking or standing in perfect silence, as they often did. This had grown

to be the habit of her life now, and no sooner was an occupation dropped, and her thoughts free, but they sprang, as with a bound of relief, to meet her Father in heaven, and strength was sought and found, and patience given to endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

“My grace is sufficient for thee,” Amy proved again and again; but it was not for grace alone that she prayed, but for release from this house of bondage. Every week that passed did but rivet the chains of Romanism more tightly about her sister, while as to her cousin, the growing levity she displayed about any thing sacred was scarcely less dangerous. Surely a way of escape would be opened for them before the end of their year—surely God would hear and answer her prayers, and enable her to send a word of warning to

the friends of Augusta Crane not to trust their only son to the guidance and teaching of these Jesuit fathers.

Poor Augusta was looking very unhappy herself now. Amy had seen her several times since she had overheard the conversation in the Spiritual Mother's room, and, looking at her closely, she could see that a troubled, anxious look had taken the place of the calm self-satisfaction that usually shone in her face; and possessing, as she did, the secret clew to this, she pitied and prayed for her very often—prayed that God would enlighten her mind with his truth, and save her brother from being exposed to the danger so many found it impossible to resist.

But, of course, all this was a secret Amy kept securely locked in her own breast. What she had overheard in the Spiritual

Mother's room was a dangerous secret, she knew, and not even to Milly would she whisper a syllable of it. She often wished she had not heard it herself, for it had filled her with a vague terror of the knowledge and power of the sisterhood, which she feared they would use, if they could, with little regard to right or wrong; for this was the doctrine constantly instilled into them: that right was to obey the commands of the Church given by the voice of her appointed priests and ministers, in all things; and wrong was to disobey these commands—to prefer the voice of conscience, or the word of God, if the thing commanded militated against them.

The girls often complained now that Amy cared very little for recreation time, or the pleasure of hearing her own voice; that she was growing silent and as disagree-

able as Sister Ursula herself; and there certainly was some ground for the complaint. No young person could live such a life as Amy's without its affecting her character, and, unconscious as she was of it herself, she was growing taciturn and unsociable—preferring her own grave, serious thoughts to her companions' lively chatter. She was still kind and loving to Florie whenever she had the opportunity, but this was only on Sunday, and Miss Gladding was always with them to prevent too much being said about Florie's change of faith, for it was no secret in the school now that Florie Curtis was a devout Roman Catholic, and fully intended to become a nun when she was old enough to take the vows.

CHAPTER XI.

CONCLUSION.

NEVER had a winter seemed so long to Amy as this, which she spent at the convent school; but spring sunshine began to smile on the earth at last, and early in May it was rumored that the girls were going into retreat—that is, all who were devout Roman Catholics, or wished to become such. Amy was puzzled at first to know what this could mean, but Miss Carey explained that it was a blessed season set apart by the Superior for the cultivation of spiritual grace in the soul, when all worldly occupations were abandoned for a few days, and the whole time was given up to prayer, silent medi-

tation, and hearing sermons preached by the holy father appointed to conduct the retreat. The whole routine of the convent was turned upside down when the retreat began, and for some hours every day the Protestant girls were left very much to their own devices—those of them, at least, who did not choose to go into chapel to hear the sermons. Three of these were preached every day, each of an hour's length; and Amy saw, to her dismay, that Florie went to these, and also spent a good deal of time in the chapel besides. She was praying before the statue of the Virgin, she heard from the other girls—praying for her conversion to Romanism.

Those in retreat now maintained a strict silence all day, and any one transgressing this rule was said to break the retreat, al

though some did not hesitate to communicate with their companions by gestures and signs, like deaf mutes. But the Protestant girls were not allowed to lose all the benefits that were said to arise from this retreat. Besides the sermons, two instructions of half an hour, one given by the mistress-general of the school, and the other by Sister Ursula, were also delivered, at which all the girls were present, and three readings from religious books, of twenty minutes' duration, were also added. Then those in retreat went to confession every day, and were supposed to spend the intervening time in silent prayer or kneeling before some of the statues in the chapel. Florie chose the latter exercise, and her sister rarely saw her now, except as she passed her at meals or going to bed; but one day as she passed her thus

she slipped a letter into her hand, but without speaking or turning her head.

Amy thought it must be from her mamma—a letter Florie had received that morning—but she slipped it quietly into her pocket, and did not take it out to read until she was alone, and then she could hardly believe the evidence of her senses, and she wondered whether Florie knew anything of its contents. She had to read it over a second time before she could recover from her astonishment sufficiently to be able to understand it, but then she read it more calmly, but still with trembling fingers.

“DEAR MISS CURTIS:—I know I can trust you, for you have proved yourself worthy by being true to the convictions of your religious faith. I need hardly

tell you how I was led to abandon mine, but the obedience now demanded of me is a yoke heavier than I can bear, and yet I am afraid I shall yield some day, and be led to draw my brother into this net. Save us both from this, I beseech you ; nothing can be done for me now, I fear ; but save him by warning my father not to listen to any thing from any body, even from me, that would induce him to send him here, or to any Jesuit college.

“How are you to do this? you ask. Never mind how I know it, but I do know that you are anxious to leave this place, and I will help you to escape if you will trust me. I cannot do this myself, for my dress would at once betray me, but you would escape observation, and once at the railway depot the greatest danger would be over. Have you any

money? I cannot help you in this, for novices are not allowed to possess any of their own; but if you could borrow sufficient of Milly to take you to the city, I will give you another letter to my father's agent in New York, who will at once communicate with him, and supply you with whatever you may need. Stay in New York until my father arrives; I feel sure he will come; you can tell him all about this place much better than I can write.

“And now for my plan for your escape. To-morrow, Thursday, you are all to be invited to walk in the garden just before the last service in the chapel. Instead of going in with the rest, hide among the evergreens near the gate; I have a key, and will contrive to drop it close by as I pass to chapel, but do not attempt to stir

until dark. I hope you will not be missed by your friends—Milly, for instance, might raise an outcry; stop this if you can—say you are going to the Spiritual Mother's room, and no notice will be taken of your absence.

“Be sure not to open the gate until dark, and walk quietly and cautiously at first for fear any one should be about. Throw the key back when you have locked the gate. God bless and help you! prays your friend,
AUGUSTA CRANE.”

After reading the letter the second time, Amy replaced it in its envelope and placed it in her bosom, and then lifted her heart in silent prayer to God—prayer for help, and thanksgiving that at last a door of escape was likely to open for her.

Escape! And so near, too. She could

hardly realize it at first, and she had to put her hand to the bosom of her dress where Augusta's letter lay hidden, to assure herself that it was not all a dream. She had to be careful, too, when she undressed herself, that Miss Carey did not see the letter. She almost decided to destroy it for fear of this contingency, but she was anxious to take something with her by way of credentials to the gentleman Augusta wished her to see, and it might be she would not have an opportunity of writing again. She had inclosed his address for fear she should not; and to guard her precious possession from being discovered by the sister on guard Milly resolved to lie awake all that night, for she had a keen suspicion that their pockets were often turned out during the night, and every scrap of paper or remains of a

letter examined. It was not easy to do this, and she dared not let the sister see her lying with her eyes open; but fear of bringing fresh trouble to Augusta, and the hope of speedy release for herself and her sister, made it not altogether impossible; and she was half dressed, and the letter again hidden in her bosom with the few dollar bills she possessed, before the bell rang the next morning.

"You are up early," whispered her companion, as she slipped out of bed.

Amy nodded, feeling thankful for once that the rule of silence precluded any further answer.

After breakfast, when they were in the school-room, she contrived to speak to Milly, for she had decided that it would be better to let her into a part of the secret, at least, that she might ward off any

inquiries being made for her in the evening if she should be missed.

"Where are you going then, Amy? you don't mean to scale the walls, do you?" asked Milly in some surprise.

Amy put her finger to her lips. "I mean to escape if I can, and I want you to prevent the discovery as long as you can. If I am not missed until bedtime you may consider I have reached New York, or am on my way there."

"I say, you'll send for papa first thing, wont you?"

"Yes, that I will," replied Amy.

"Have you got any money?" asked her cousin, rather ruefully. "O Amy, I am sorry, but I haven't a cent left, that Christmas affair cost such a lot!"

"Never mind, dear, I have got enough. I have been saving one or two dollar bills

on purpose that if ever I had a chance of getting away—”

“But how do you know you will have the chance to-night, Amy?” interrupted her cousin.

“You mustn't ask any more questions. Don't say a word to Florie about this talk; don't let her know I have gone if you can help it.”

“I'll be as mum as a mouse. Never fear; I won't betray you, and if we only get out of this place we'll all go home together, and you shall help me to undo all the harm I have got here.”

It was no unusual thing for the girls to go for a walk in the convent garden. They rarely went beyond the walls of this—once or twice they had walked along the road leading through the village, but the nuns' garden was large, and af-

forded ample space for exercise, and under the existing *régime* was, of course, preferred by the authorities, as affording all that was necessary in the way of a change from their own playground. They put on their bonnets and capes, or shawls, and changed their boots when they went to walk there, so as to make it seem as much as possible like going out. There was a little more liberty allowed them, too, in walking and talking; but no running or shouting or romping was, of course, allowed. Amy asked Milly not to walk with her all the time, but to join her a short time before the bell rang for them to leave, and if Miss Carey was with her, to engage her in conversation, while she stayed behind.

All this Milly did most faithfully. Her carelessness about the letter at Christmas

time made her the more careful now; and when the girls were all flocking in, she pretended to be frightened at something she had seen at the chapel windows, and set up a series of shrieks that attracted every body's attention to herself at first, and then sent the nuns hurrying in frightened haste to the chapel.

In the midst of this commotion it was easy enough for Amy to linger behind, and hide herself in the thick growing bushes that partially concealed the gate that opened into a lane running at the back of the convent.

Before the disturbance had quite subsided, Augusta passed with the other novices, and Amy, lying on the ground, saw a little black parcel fall among the bushes; but Augusta never turned her head in the direction of the gate. Amy felt anxious

to get the parcel at once, but, remembering her friend's caution, she did not venture to stir, or even to put out her hand to reach it, for fear of discovery, until it began to grow dark. She did not have to wait long for this. Before the novices returned from the chapel she judged it would be safe for her to get up and seize her prize—the key of the gate. There was a letter with it directed to Mr. Edwards, and, putting this and the piece of black rag in her pocket, she crept to the gate, and, trembling from head to foot, slipped the key into the lock, turned it the next minute, and stood outside.

“Free at last!” murmured Amy, as she carefully put the key in on the outer side, and then, locking the gate, threw it over again, so that it would fall among the bushes near the spot where she had found

it. For one moment she stood with her face bowed in her hands, to thank God for his great mercy, and then, quite forgetting Augusta's caution, walked away as fast as she could.

Fortunately there was no one about to see her, and she avoided going through the village by keeping to this lonely lane, which joined the road leading to the depot, about a mile from the convent. It was a long walk, and Amy soon began to feel hungry as well as tired, for she had had no supper, this meal being deferred until eight o'clock during retreat, by which time Amy hoped to be in the train and on her way to New York. She had no idea what time the train stopped here, or how frequently they ran. She was almost afraid to think about this; she could only pray, and hope, and press on with all speed. In

spite of her weariness she was able to walk faster than she had thought possible, and reached the depot in time to hear some one call out, "Any more for the last train?"

"Yes, yes!" panted Amy, and the next minute she was lifted on board by the conductor, and they were steaming out to New York and freedom.

The first feeling of bewildered thankfulness over, Amy took out her treasured dollar bills to pay for her ticket, and asked the conductor what time they would reach New York.

"Eleven o'clock, miss," said the man, handing her the ticket.

"Eleven o'clock!" repeated Amy. She had never been out so late at night in her life, and a little shiver of fear ran through her. But she would not yield to this; God had helped her thus far, and would

continue to do so; and so she turned to look at some of her traveling companions. A comfortable-looking Quaker lady sat a few seats off, and Amy left her own seat and crossed over to her.

"Will you allow me to sit with you, ma'am?" she asked, in a faltering voice.

"To be sure thee may, child; it is late for thee to be traveling alone," and the gentle old lady made room for her to come and sit beside her. From that moment Amy felt that all her troubles were over. In half an hour she was telling the lady where she had come from, and why she was running away from school.

"My dear, thee shall come home with me to-night, and I will go with thee to this friend in the morning. I do not blame thee for what thou hast done; it is a sore pity that parents do not make

themselves better acquainted with all schools to which they intrust their children."

Before New York was reached Amy fell asleep, overcome by weariness and the sense of rest and security the old lady had given her. A carriage was waiting at the depot for the old lady, and Amy was not sorry to find that a few minutes took them home, where a supper awaited them.

The next morning the old lady took her in the carriage to Mr. Edwards' office, who at once telegraphed for Mr. Crane, and Mr. Curtis too.

The kind old lady would have persuaded her to go back with her, and wait until her mother or uncle arrived, but Amy preferred to go to some of their old friends, who would be glad to welcome her. An-

other thing : it would cause her mother less alarm, she thought, to know that she was with friends ; but she promised to bring her uncle to see her new-made friend as soon as he arrived, and also let her know how the affair ended.

Of course, upon receiving Mr. Edwards' telegram, summoning him to come at once upon urgent business touching his daughter's welfare, Mr. Curtis set off without delay ; and at the depot he met Mr. Crane going on the same errand. The first alarm over, they began to think the whole thing must be a joke, for a lively letter had reached them from Milly only the day before, and Annette and his wife's maid had so often told them that if any thing happened, or she was at all seriously ill, the convent authorities would be sure to communicate with them at once. It seemed

that Annette had something to communicate to somebody, for while they were speaking she came out of the telegraph office.

"There is a minute to spare. I'll go and inquire who she has been sending to," said Mr. Crane.

In response to his question, the telegraph operator replied:

"That person who has just gone out often sends messages to a Mr. Ring, at the Jesuit Seminary. The one she has just sent reads, 'Something has happened. They are coming. Be prepared.'"

"Then that woman is a Jesuit spy, Crane," said Mr. Curtis, when he heard the result of his friend's inquiry. They ceased to grumble about the loss and hinderance it would be to their business now. To save time Mr. Crane telegraphed to Mr.

Edwards to meet the train on its arrival, and that gentleman wisely thought it would be best to take Amy with him, to tell her own tale, and deliver Augusta's letter into her father's hand.

I need hardly add that a visit to the convent quickly followed upon their arrival, and that Augusta, Milly, and Florie, with the three girls who had lately been sent, were at once removed from the care of the nuns. But, alas! the effects of the teaching they had received could not be removed or left behind. Milly had become more flippant and less disposed than ever to think of serious things; Florie became a stanch Roman Catholic, and afterward a nun, while as to Amy herself, this six months in a convent school crushed out all the buoyancy of her character, and she became a silent, taciturn—many said

morose — girl. But Amy could never be morose; she was too loving and affectionate ever to shut herself up entirely to herself; but it cost her an effort to be social and agreeable, and friends who knew her before said her life had been spoiled by this convent school.

THE END.

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